

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Homer from the Hellenistic Age to  
Late Antiquity

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# Brill's Companion to the Reception of Homer from the Hellenistic Age to Late Antiquity

*Edited by*

Christina-Panagiota Manolea



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Penteli, August 2021

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# Introduction

*Christina-Panagiota Manolea*

Homer has been one of the most influential poets in the history of ideas ever. The tradition of his poetry's reception in antiquity certainly brings to mind Aeschylus' famous statement that his own poems were no more than slices from the great banquet of Homer.<sup>1</sup> Yet there is also the case of Xenophanes,<sup>2</sup> who bitterly criticized the one who was considered the poet "by pre-eminence" (κατ' ἐξοχήν),<sup>3</sup> as well as a theologian, who actually created the Greek pantheon.<sup>4</sup> Further on, Plato's critique not only of Homer, but of poetry and art in general has played a major role in the history of ideas. Plato argued about Homer on theological, educational, psychological, and cognitive grounds. His attitude has influenced various writers throughout the centuries and has raised controversies, but it has also brought into light serious matters of reception and the function of art in general.<sup>5</sup>

Naturally, the literary and philosophical reception of the Homeric poems as well as the formation of the text in itself was long and challenging throughout Antiquity.<sup>6</sup> A volume that deals with the reception of Homer in the Hellenistic age and Late Antiquity will shed light on how the Homeric poems were transmitted and actually appropriated by writers of the late 4th century BCE to the 5th century CE. Literature, rhetoric, and philosophy, all of which played a major role in the formation of Hellenistic and Late Antique thought, are the basic fields where Homeric reception can be traced.

To start with literature, it is common knowledge that Hellenistic poetry was heavily dependent on Homer in terms of style, language, and themes.<sup>7</sup> The

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- 1 Athenaeus *Deipn.* 8.347e. For what Aeschylus did want to underline see Grube (1965) 12–13.
  - 2 It should be stressed that this critique is well placed in his philosophical system. For the latter see Barnes (1982) 82–99 and McKirahan (1994).
  - 3 See, for instance, Harmon's pioneering article (1923).
  - 4 On Homer as the creator of the Greek pantheon see Herodotus *Hist.* 2.53.
  - 5 For an account of the bibliography on Plato's hostility to art up to the 1960s, see Gould (1964). His analysis of the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy is a fine contribution to our knowledge on the subject (Gould, 1990). For Plato's attitude towards Homer see also Murray (1996), especially 19–24 and Manolea (2004) 28–32.
  - 6 On Homer as a foundational text see Finkelberg (2003). It should also be noted that apart from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* other works were ascribed to Homer in Antiquity, the most interesting of them being the so-called *Homeric Hymns*. A recent inclusive work on the reception of the *Homeric Hymns* is Faulkner, Vergados, Schwab (2016).
  - 7 For the influence of Homer on the Hellenistic poets see Rengakos (1993).

Hellenistic age is also widely known as the age when the Homeric poems were carefully studied and analyzed.<sup>8</sup> The philological interpretation of them played a major role in the reception of the Homeric poems till the end of Antiquity and afterwards.<sup>9</sup>

The theory of rhetoric also played a major role in Late Antiquity.<sup>10</sup> The rhetorical corpus of Hermogenes of Tarsus (2nd century CE) dominated the education of Late Antiquity and long afterwards.<sup>11</sup> The works of the writers of the Second Sophistic had no avowedly political tone, yet they dealt with many everyday issues and with educational matters.<sup>12</sup> Quite naturally, considerable Homeric influences can be traced in both pagan authors and those Christian writers who had received a sound education in rhetoric.

In both the Hellenistic age and Late Antiquity philosophy flourished. Stoics, Epicureans, Middle Platonists, and Neoplatonists showed interest in Homer in one way or another.<sup>13</sup> Allegorical interpretation of Homer flourished and was practiced by many philosophers of Late Antiquity. What is more, Homer even acquired the status of a theologian himself. Physical and metaphysical allegories going hand in hand with considerable theological dimensions occupy a prominent place in many Neoplatonist philosophers' works.<sup>14</sup> And as theology goes hand in hand with philosophy, the Christian writers of Late Antiquity in their turn dealt with Homer in many ways. Given the turbulent times that pagans and Christians experienced,<sup>15</sup> it is thought-provoking to see the undeniable presence and the function of Homeric themes and passages in the works of Christian writers of the era. It is an undeniable fact that from the Hellenistic age onwards the Greek world went through considerable changes on many levels,<sup>16</sup> yet Greek *paideia* (that in one way or another included Homer) continued to flourish in new contexts.

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8 See Reynolds and Wilson's pioneering work (1991).

9 On the presence of literary and rhetorical theories in the *scholia vetera* see Meijering (1987).

10 As an introduction to late antiquity Brown's book (1971) is still valuable.

11 For Hermogenes and the Hermogenic corpus see Kennedy (1994) 208–217. For Hermogenes' influence on writers of the Byzantium see Kustas (1973), whereas for Hermogenes' influence on writers of the Renaissance after the edition of his Corpus by Aldus Manutius see Patterson (1970).

12 On the Second Sophistic see Bowersock (1969) and Whitmarsh (2005).

13 See Manolea (2004) 36–42.

14 For Homeric allegories in Neoplatonism and for the status of Homer as a theologian, the pioneering work of Lamberton (1986) is still the starting point of any research.

15 The admittedly complicated issue is brilliantly dealt in Dodds' classic work (1965); cf. also Fowden (1982) and Athanassiadi and Frede (1999).

16 The process is nicely described by Green (1990).



## 1 The Essays in This Volume

The present volume covers the period from the Hellenistic age till the dawn of Late Antiquity and is divided into three main sections, namely literary reception, rhetoric, and philosophy-theology. The task of reconstituting the image of Homer during such a large and varied period as this volume intends to do is admittedly a daunting one. Both pagan and Christian authors offer us a view of the impact of the rich and long Homeric tradition reflecting each author's era and revealing each one's own specific purposes.

In the section on literary reception two essays are dedicated to poetry. Jane L. Lightfoot examines Hellenistic poetry other than epigram. Homer's dominance in many fields (as teacher, master, paradigm, even divinity) led to different responses. The erudition of the *poetae docti* of the era<sup>17</sup> led in turn to a poetic production that exploited the existing tradition creatively. Lightfoot considers the legacy of Homeric epic and the different reactions to it. Next to authors who wished to revive it in some way we find ones whose reaction involves an alternative aesthetic. One of the major points of her contribution is that she shows that the opposition between Apollonius and Callimachus as representatives of these two "schools" was a false one. The contribution ends with the exposition of the *Hellenistic Hymns*, a genre related to the traditional *Homeric Hymns* yet different and innovative in many ways. The Hellenistic era of erudition produced subtle, innovative, and self-standing works of art.

The briefest of all poetic genres, namely the epigram, provides us with material concerning Homer, yet its relationship to the Homeric poems remains paradoxical and intriguing, as Luis Arturo Guichard emphasizes. The genre was refreshed and transformed in the hands of the first-generation Alexandrian poets under the influence of Alexandrian philological practices and by readapting the epic text to new erotic-symposiac themes as well.<sup>18</sup> Guichard focuses on epigrams from the 1st to 4th centuries CE. Most Homeric allusions are traced in the parody of literary models. Thus, the Homeric elements are a weapon in the battle of the new genre against its predecessors. In other epigrams the poet is treated as a figure who has gained an undeniable respect. Guichard demonstrates Homer's influence on Lucillius, Nicarchus, Ammianus, Rufinus, Strato, and Palladas, and on Christian epigrams of Gregory of Nazianzus as well.

17 For the importance of the Alexandrian period as far as philology is concerned see Bing (2008).

18 A first yet accurate picture of Homer in the Hellenistic epigram is Skiadas' 1965 book, which is still valuable. Further on, Durbec, Pralon, and Trajber's collective volume (2017) offers new perspectives of the genre in question and its context.

In his essay dedicated to Hellenistic novel Christos Fakas stresses that the *Odyssey* served as a model for the novel both in its narrative techniques and in its very storyline. Taking the figure of Odysseus as the basic *comparans* for numerous novelistic characters, his contribution focuses on novelistic adaptation of the figure of Odysseus by Chariton.<sup>19</sup> The main figures of the novel are reminiscent of the main characters of the *Odyssey*, but secondary characters also present intertextual links with Odysseus. In fact, the new literary genre legitimates itself by exploiting the prestige of epic poetry. What Chariton does is that he invents a middle-class prose epic, with the love element at its nucleus and with a pair of lovers as co-protagonists. The author is always in dialogue with Homer, and this also goes for the subsequent history of the ancient novel.

The *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smyrna (3rd cent CE) is a Greek epic poem that includes all the events of the Trojan War after the *Iliad* and before the *Odyssey*.<sup>20</sup> After giving a brief account Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica* from Late Antiquity to modern times, Georgios Tsomis focuses on Quintus as a great emulator and zealous admirer of Homer. He examines the main epic features of Quintus' *Posthomerica* (diction, style, metre, heroic figures, divine apparatus, outline, similes, *ekphrasis*, and *gnomai*). The poet's erudition in an age of intertextuality is manifest throughout his work, which bears clearly Homeric as well as Hellenistic influences. Quintus stayed close to the Homeric metre, kept all the traditional characters, and enriched the role of the gods in his epic. But above all, as Tsomis convincingly argues, Quintus was a poet with remarkable creative power who dived into tradition and aimed successfully to serve the reader's pleasure.

The first part of the volume closes with Nonnus of Panopolis, whose *Dionysiaca* can be considered as one of the greatest achievements of late antiquity.<sup>21</sup> In the first section of their contribution Gianfranco Agosti and Enrico Maggelli show that the Homeric influences on the proem and on book 25 are easily traceable, but the poet is not a mere imitator. In the next section they analyze how Nonnus retains his originality even as he recreates entire scenes from both epics, and they show that his text is characterised by abundance, multiplicity, and creative incorporation of traditional elements. Nonnus renews the pre-existing tradition in many ways, not the least of which is his endeavor to combine Homeric scholarship with Christian hermeneutics. Agosti and Maggelli reach the conclusion that the view that Nonnus' poem is merely a

19 On Chariton's novel and the genre in general see Hägg (1983).

20 For a recent picture of Quintus' life and works see Baumbach and Bär (2007) 1–26.

21 A nice recent view of this highly influential writer and his *Dionysiaca* is to be found in Shorrock (2001) and (2011).

rich paraphrase of Homeric poetry needs to be reconsidered. Nonnus was very innovative and the fact that he used un-Homeric language, style, metrics, and narrative techniques demonstrates this.

In the first essay of the section dedicated to rhetoric, Malcolm Heath states that during Late Antiquity as well as the Imperial period a student's training would provide them at least with a knowledge of Homer that could lead to the use of his text as a familiar point of reference and as a source of unquestionable status.<sup>22</sup> Yet the relationship of Homer's image to the reality of professional activity of rhetoricians as theorists and teachers is an issue that demands careful consideration. Pseudo-Dionysius' case shows that the author has adapted his attitude towards Homer according to the different pedagogic strategy he used each time. The *Iliad's* status as a school text becomes less significant as we move away from educational contexts and towards sophisticated compositions addressed to an educated adult audience. The reception of Homer in some of the most important texts of the late rhetorical corpus shows that the use of Homer by rhetoricians is primarily illustrative of stylistic or local tactical devices, rather than of larger-scale structures or strategies of argument. The rhetoricians, having knowledge of and possibly enthusiasm for Homer, used the Homeric texts in a way suited to their occasional needs.

Homer's role in the Second Sophistic is a challenging issue in itself, given the prominence of the movement in question.<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Kim focuses on the reception of Homer by authors active from the late-first to the mid-third century CE. Homer's influence penetrated Imperial sophistic discourse widely and profoundly. Thus, Kim first discusses the variety of Homeric citational practices that are characteristic of sophistic authors as a group. In the works of the Second Sophistic the *overall* frequency of Homeric citations is quite high, yet certain authors refer to Homer significantly more often than others. Moreover, Homeric verses are widely used to express fundamental truths about the gods, the natural world, and the human condition. Homer was an authority, but not an absolute one. Furthermore, certain writers of the Second Sophistic interestingly suggested that Homer composed his epics with the instruction and advice of his audience in mind. The role of Homer in *paideia* is not to be neglected.

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22 On the wider issue of Homer's place in education Marrou's pioneering work (1956) is still valuable. For a criticism of his traditional view see Sandnes (2009) 20–31.

23 For Homer in the Second Sophistic see Kim (2010).

The section continues with the exposition of the reception of Homer by Synesius of Cyrene<sup>24</sup> and Libanius.<sup>25</sup> Aglae Pizzone shows how Synesius, a Hellenized Christian, challenges the rhetorical habits of his predecessors and contemporaries, referring explicitly to Homer. We are undoubtedly dealing with an alternative view of the rhetorical practice of Homeric quotations. Synesius practices a dynamic mimesis and never totally disappears behind his models when he imitates ancient writers. Libanius' rhetorical use of Homer serves as a contrast to Synesius' attitude and he exemplifies the pleasure of Homeric citation. A final section is devoted to the use of Homer in the epistolary communication of Synesius and Libanius. The former used Homeric reference to sustain and reinforce personal relationships, while the latter not only incorporated Homeric material for ornamental purposes but also often made use of the Homeric tradition as a structural element to his letters.

The last contribution devoted to rhetoric deals with Themistius' reception of Homer.<sup>26</sup> Robert J. Penella underlines that the philosopher, senator, and imperial panegyrist, Themistius was a consummate Greek *pēpaideumenos*. The extent of the elegant use of Homeric material is impressive. In Themistius' text Homer is not always referred by name, but simply as "the poet", while he is often positively evaluated. Penella remarks that Themistius uses both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, calls Homer "divinely inspired" and "the wisest", but this does not prevent him from criticizing Homer from time to time. Then Penella provides us with a detailed account of the use of Homeric words or phrases in Themistius' works. The crucial issue of Homeric allegory is analyzed, followed by a section on Plato and Homer, who stand apart from other classics, forming something of a pair. The Platonic references as well as the Homeric echoes function like a cult in Themistius.

The third section deals with the reception of Homer by philosophers of the Hellenistic age to Late Antiquity, an era rich in followings and schools. The crucial subject of allegory in the Stoics<sup>27</sup> is presented by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli. She states at the beginning that for the Stoics allegory was part and parcel of philosophy and that they frequently used etymology as a tool. The cases of Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Diogenes of Babylon, Apollodorus, Crates of Mallus, who was the Head of the School of Pergamum, and Annaeus Cornutus

24 Bregman (1982) gives a nice account of Synesius' life and works.

25 Cribiore (2007) offers a reconstruction of Libanius' school of rhetoric.

26 Dagron (1968) has shown Themistius' importance as a writer but also his role in politics.

27 The issue of allegory in the Stoics is a broad one. Substantial studies include Steinmetz (1986), Most (1989), and Long (1992), yet the attitudes expressed in these works and in later bibliography are divergent.

are eruditely presented, each author showing his own special characteristics. From Ramelli's article we can see that the reception of Homer was elaborate and multi-sided. The difficult case of Heraclitus, the author of the *Homeric Allegories*, is also presented, followed by a section devoted to Ps.-Plutarch's *Life and Poetry of Homer*. Ramelli tames rich yet often difficult material, demonstrating that the Stoics did take Homer very seriously and took pains to fit him into their philosophical and theological system.<sup>28</sup>

Given that the Epicureans considered Homer not as a source of every kind of knowledge but as an author with limited wisdom, the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus did not regard poetry as the appropriate medium for teaching. Jeffrey Fish remarks that as Philodemus held that the Homeric poems contained both profoundly good and profoundly bad opinions, he often cited or paraphrased the Homeric text when he considered it fitting. Fish exposes the Homeric elements in Philodemus' *On the Good King according to Homer*, a work that contains both Homeric scholarship and practical advice for a ruler. In the treatise Philodemus demonstrates how Homer communicates principles of leadership and often speculates about Homer's opinion on various issues. Philodemus often acts like a Homeric scholar and exposes his overall positive attitude towards Homer's ideal of a good king.

It is difficult to think of allegories, Homeric or non-Homeric, without bringing Philo to mind.<sup>29</sup> In his contribution John Dillon explains that Philo was impressively proficient in all aspects of contemporary Hellenic *paideia* and thus his acquaintance with Homer and well as the acknowledgment of the poet as "the greatest and most respected of the poets" should not be surprising. We should not forget, of course, that all this is due to Philo's attempt to establish Moses as the father of philosophy. Furthermore, the fact that allegories co-exist with several purely literary references in Philo's work provides us with a clearer picture of the Homeric reception by Philo. Dillon focuses on particular instances of Philo's use of Homeric passages. He first outlays a representative sample of Philo's "basic" literary uses of the Homeric poems, and then he provides us with instances of Philo's use of Homer on the allegorical level, thus drawing an inclusive image of the Homeric reception by the philosopher.

Plutarch is undoubtedly one of the most prolific writers of his era. But he is also probably the author who, being both an educated person and a man

28 For instance, see Montiglio's chapter on Odysseus in Cynic and Stoic thought in Montiglio (2011) 66–94.

29 For a first encounter with Philo see Borgen (1997). For Philo and Homer see Niehoff (2012a) 127–136.

of politics,<sup>30</sup> quotes the greatest number of ancient writers in his highly influential works. Diotima Papadi stresses that his use is not simply that of mere quotation that aims at showing erudition. Plutarch incorporates his sources into his work in his effort to offer a literary interpretation. Being an heir of the ethical attitude towards poetry, Plutarch does not exclude poetry from the state, like Plato, but insists on its proper use. In his surviving works the number of quotations from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are numerous. Homer is regarded as an authority on historical, scientific, psychological, political, and ethical matters. In *How a young man should listen to poetry* we trace the function of the Homeric tradition within its strong educational and practical aspect. It should also be stressed that for Plutarch, Homer is both a great poet and a great philosopher.

Yet the Homeric tradition was not present only in the works of pagan philosophers of the era. In late Antiquity Christian authors emerged and gradually claimed their place in the history of ideas; given the difficult times pagans and Christians had, the reception of Homer in Christian texts is challenging.

The Christian apologist Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus* engages most closely with pagan culture with reference to his other surviving works.<sup>31</sup> Cornelia van der Poll shows that this work exhibits many of the ethical concerns about the Homeric myths which are also raised by Christian apologists of the second century CE and that Clement was a far better scholar than them all. Clement believes that the Greeks have their own independent knowledge of God, adopts the Stoic perception of the divine *logos*, and maintains that the latter is present in the works of the Greek poets as "sparks". In the *Stromateis* Homer's knowledge of truth is described as limited, yet according to Clement traces of Scripture can be found even in Homer's texts. In the *Protrepticus* Homer represents Greek culture and *paideia*. Despite the criticism of the Homeric gods, the *Odyssey* is read as an ethical text. Van der Pohl remarks that for Clement Odysseus is a paradigm of a person journeying through life.

Origen was the author of a great number of works,<sup>32</sup> but, as Ronald E. Heine stresses, despite his education and profession, which would normally point to a good knowledge and a regular use of Homer, the poet is nevertheless mentioned only in the *Contra Celsum*. Origen, fully aware and an admirer of Homer's skills as a writer, sometimes introduces verses, phrases, and sayings from Homer into his arguments. His overall attitude towards Homer is positive.

30 A nice account of Plutarch's relation to history and politics is that by Pelling (2002); cf. also Beneker (2012).

31 Ashwin-Siejkowski (2008) is a rather recent study on Clement and his importance.

32 Edwards (2009) deals with the challenging issue of Origen's relation to the dogma.

After presenting the vocabulary used for allegorical reading by Origen and Celsus, Heine examines the similarities and differences between Celsus' allegorical reading of Homer and Origen's allegorical reading of Moses. It is evident that Origen did not regard the Homeric texts as "foundational texts" like the Mosaic writings. He never appealed to Homer in order to establish Christian truth.

Admittedly, not every Christian writer was favorable towards Homer. Eusebius seems not to have been a keen admirer of the poet.<sup>33</sup> Mark Edwards remarks that a prolific author though he was, no long citations from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* are to be found in his works and that the few citations of any kind are presented through an intermediary. Though Eusebius must have been aware of Clement's, Methodius', and Origen's readings of Homer, for him Homer seems to have been no more than synecdoche of the negative elements of popular religion. What Eusebius is really interested in is to prove that only the unanimity of the Scriptures can put an end to the logomachy of the Greek philosophical schools. But still, as Edwards' analysis shows, evidence from his own works show that the Christian Eusebius had a higher opinion of Plato than of Homer. Eusebius seems to have been aware of the rigor and the quality of the Homeric tradition – yet his attitude towards the poet was never favourable.

The attitude of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzen towards Homer is discussed in Sarah Klitenic Wear's contribution. Basil and Gregory give us an example of how Christianity appropriated and surpassed Hellenic learning and faith. Wear stresses that both Basil and Gregory undertook the project of uniting scriptural learning with classical education. In Gregory we find Homeric references as well as Homeric words and stock phrases, slightly altered, despite the undeniable fact that in his *Orations* he places Greek myth in the category of Greek error.<sup>34</sup> According to Gregory, any erudition in any traditional field of study is always secondary to Christian truth. Basil in turn, well-schooled in Hellenic thought as he was,<sup>35</sup> urged young men to learn from "the famous men of the ancients", but to do so with discretion. In his orations he sometimes uses Homer as a model of virtue, using allegory in this effort. Wear concludes that both Gregory and Basil constantly repeated to their audience that some of the content of Homeric poetry had the potential to damage Christians on a path to virtue.

The last two contributions of the volume are dedicated mainly to the reception of Homer in Neoplatonism. First, Robert Lamberton focuses on the

33 Barnes (2009) has offered us a brief yet illuminating introduction to Eusebius.

34 For Gregory's attitude towards the classical tradition see Demoen (1996) and Faulkner (2010).

35 Wilson's work (1975) is still valuable today.

reception of Homer by Cronius and Numenius.<sup>36</sup> He lucidly presents their close association, treating some chronological issues as well as the difficulty of their placement in a Pythagorean milieu and their allegorical practices. He then draws a larger picture of Porphyry's relationship to Homer, stressing that he combined the practice of a philologist and a philosopher, something that appears odd to modern eyes. Porphyry's *Homeric Questions*, a work of considerable value and influence, as well as the *Styx*, an essay of uncertain content yet one important for the use of Homer in the context of theology, are discussed. The influential work *On the Cave of the Nymphs* is a landmark for allegorical Homeric exegesis, and Lamberton demonstrates that the allegories in this work show the use of the Homeric works in support of a Platonist metaphysics and have been highly influential, but he also stresses that the beginnings of this reading in the second century remain obscure.

Heirs of Porphyry and his disciple Iamblichus, the members of the Neoplatonic School of Athens (namely Syrianus, Hermias, and Proclus) offer us one of the most interesting examples of Homeric reception in a philosophical context in Antiquity. The members of the School approach Homer as a theologian, treat his passages allegorically, and generally fit his verses into important passages of Neoplatonic theology and metaphysics. Anne Sheppard stresses that Proclus' discussion of the passages of Homer criticized by Plato in *Republic* 2 and 3 proves his familiarity not only with the problems themselves but with the corresponding discussion throughout classical antiquity as well. Moreover, in the *Hymns* we see how Proclus exploited traditional hymnic material to express his own philosophical view of the gods as well as his own poetic theory. As the school bore and combined diverse philosophical and theological traditions, Syrianus, Hermias, and Proclus used metaphysical allegories extensively in their effort to prove that Homer and Plato are in agreement with each other and also stand next to and agree with authorities such as the Orphic poems and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

The Neoplatonists of the School of Ammonius, son of Hermias, that flourished in Alexandria did not maintain this elaborate and distinctive attitude towards Homer. They did use Homeric quotations in their surviving works in various passages of metaphysics, epistemology, theology, etc., but not in an allegorical way.<sup>37</sup> For the School of Alexandria Homer was an authority as a

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36 A first picture on the three philosophers (and not only) is to be found at Lamberton (1986).

37 For the school of Ammonius' metaphysics and epistemology see Tempelis (1998).



poet, not as a philosopher or a theologian. This puts them in the chain of the Homeric tradition, of course, but in a rather different way.<sup>38</sup>

The Homeric tradition naturally outlived this last pagan school, yet that is a story for another book covering a later period. What we have tried to show in this volume is how Homer was admired, criticized, interpreted, exploited, and transformed from the Hellenistic age to the dawn of Late Antiquity. The image given to the reader of the texts of this era is sometimes that of a kaleidoscope. What remains is a text (or rather a living tradition) that in one way or another shines everywhere over and over again and puts its own imprint on diverse writers, both pagan and Christian, thus proving its enduring vigor and value.

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38 See Manolea (2009).

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**PART 1**

*Literary Reception*





# Homer and Hellenistic Poetry (Other Than Epigram)

*Jane L. Lightfoot*

## 1 Introduction

The background to the topic of this chapter – the reception of Homer in Hellenistic poetry other than epigram – is his universal acknowledgement as teacher, as master, as paradigm, even as divinity. Such dominance inevitably calls forth a hugely varied range of response, but the basic fact is not in doubt. A speaker in Theocritus – admittedly, one who is looking for an excuse not to have to commission any new poets – asks why one should bother with anyone else, for Homer is enough for all (*Id.* 16.20). Again, if Hermesianax’s catalogue of Greek philosophers and poets is having fun by eroticising their biographies, the epithet “divine” applied to Homer is graphically realised on a famous relief by Archelaus of Priene from Ptolemaic Egypt, showing Homer being crowned and receiving sacrifice. His seated, and very Zeus-like, posture very possibly reflects the iconography of his statue in a temple constructed for him by the fourth Ptolemy in Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> Adulatory poetry regards him as the fount of all literary genres, indeed as the mouthpiece of the kosmos itself.<sup>2</sup>

In an age as self-aware and self-critical as the Hellenistic, the great preoccupation of poets was the appropriate response to their literary heritage and above all to Homer – although the question was not a new one, for Pindar (in a frustratingly enigmatic passage) had already referred to Homer, a Muse or Muses, a path, and a chariot in a way that suggests he was distancing himself from his predecessor and advertising his innovation.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, for a practising

1 Hermesianax, fr. 7.29 P. θεῖος Ὅμηρος; for Archelaus’ Apotheosis of Homer (London, BM Sc 2191), see Newby (2007) 156–178, with bibliography. For the Alexandrian Homereion, see Aelian, *VH* 13.22, whose word is νέως.

2 Page, *GLP* no. 93 (a) 9–16 = Powell, *CA* pp. 187–88 (and the apparent travesty in Aelian, loc. cit.); Antipater of Sidon, *AP* 7.6.3–4 = *HE* 1X.3–4 (226–227). For the image of Homer as Ocean, see n. 15 below.

3 Pindar, *Pa.* VIIb.10–14; Rutherford (2001) 247–249.

poet Homer might represent continuity, tradition, and a conservative approach to poetry. But he might also provide a powerful and flexible idiom whose expressive potential had been nurtured by the centuries of attention his works had received, and which offered scope for creativity and intelligent reworking. We should note, right at the outset, that Homeric language and style was not and never could be the carrier of single meanings and universally-agreed interpretations. It carries different significations in different circumstances. For instance: in a famous fragment from the Attic comic poet Strato, a cook who speaks in high-flown Homeric glosses is nearly incomprehensible to his interlocutors, who communicate in everyday speech and need a glossary to make sense of the bewildering idiom.<sup>4</sup> But if Homeric language is absurdly pretentious *vis-à-vis* the vernacular, within poetic language itself it may be seen as routine to the point of cliché, as suggested by an epigram in which Homeric imitation is presented as cliché-ridden hack-work.<sup>5</sup> And in another move, far from being obscure and affected, Homer is manly, the poetry of “wine-drinkers” in contrast to a gloss-ridden, over-precious style attributed to the frugal and effeminate drinkers of water.<sup>6</sup>

Homer’s legacy for Hellenistic poetry is a dauntingly large topic for a single chapter, but it can be broken down. I shall begin by considering the special legacy of the Homeric dialect before moving on to the main content of the chapter, the legacy of Homeric epic and reactions to it – how epic is renewed, and how it is challenged. We shall review some of those who wish to revive it in some way, and those whose reaction takes the form of articulating an alternative aesthetic (the small, the pure, the exquisite). As we shall see, however, the opposition that used to be drawn between Apollonius and Callimachus as representatives of these two “schools” is a false one. Among genres which in some sense offer alternatives to the *os grande* of epic we need to consider epyllia, elegy, and perhaps bucolic. Next, there are genres which are related to epic, not by reaction and controversy, but simply through the use of the hexameter metre, metre being the favourite ancient means of classifying poetry. In other words, from an ancient point of view, they were related to epic genetically rather than through critique and position-taking: such genres include didactic, hymn, and perhaps bucolic (unless we have already included it among the members of the first group). And finally, there is the special case of hymn,

4 Strato, *Phoenicides*, PCG vol. VII, fr. 1.40–46, ap. Athen. *Deipn.* 9.383 a–b + P. Cair. 65445.

5 Pollianus, AP 11.130 (date uncertain; the Hadrianic period has been suggested, but only on the basis of his literary attitudes, so that the argument becomes circular).

6 Antipater of Thessalonica, AP 11.20 = *Garland* XX.



which certainly reacts to another item of the epic corpus, although it is not certain whether it rests on the belief that the *Homeric Hymns* were indeed genuine.

To begin, then, with Homer's dialect, this was itself a springboard of opportunity. Indeed, the possibilities it offered were limited only by the erudition and ingenuity of the imitator. Often it is a question of giving an impression of Homer – as Callimachus might have said (when paying tribute to Aratus' selective imitation of Hesiod), not Homer to the hilt, but what Emile Cahen called *presque homérique*.<sup>7</sup> He described it as “the illusion of Homerism”, a style which has “enough similarities to arrest the attention and the ear by recollection and resonance, [but] enough novelty to preclude the easy convenience of exact repetition”. The aim of someone writing in this style would be, “by the resemblance of some of these groupings [sc. of phrases] to the epic text, to awaken precise recollections, by the words and their sound, without ever engaging in direct imitation”; Callimachus writing in this mode “seems to want to set the reader or listener on the path of recall and then to divert him.” The effect is like Homer through a kaleidoscope, with reassembled fragments which are individually Homeric but reconfigured, sometimes combined with words that are un-Homeric, or assigned different senses from their Homeric contexts. Homeric metrical patterns may be evoked but are now filled with different content. A clever style with subtle effects, alternately enticing and frustrating, it may convey an impression of epic narrative,<sup>8</sup> or hymn, or even didactic (on whose “epic” ancestry see below). It is harder to gauge the effect in Euphron of Chalcis, who uses the same technique in the next generation, because in most cases the nature of the poems from which the extant fragments are taken is unclear. But we seem to see him extending the *presque homérique* into his favourite genre of curses, now reinvented as a species of hexameter poetry, and perhaps also into epyllion.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of Homeric evocation readily extends to other kinds of engagement with the Homeric text, erudite and specifically philological. The Homeric dialect is mediated through Homeric scholarship, in which many of the literary giants of the Hellenistic period were actively engaged. The combination of scholarship and poetry that would become such a feature of the early Alexandrian period was already pioneered by Antimachus of Colophon at the end of the classical period. The exact nature of his work on Homer is unclear,

7 Cahen (1929) 519–523 (on Callimachus' hymns).

8 For Apollonius, see Clauss (1993) 5–6; Rengakos (1994).

9 Magnelli (2002) 11–15.

but the Homeric scholia credit him with readings mostly from the *Iliad*, and the addition of explicative notes implies some sort of exegesis as well, if not a full commentary.<sup>10</sup> He is followed by the glossaries by Philitas of Cos and Simias of Rhodes, neither specifically Homeric, though apparently with points of contact with the Homeric text.<sup>11</sup> Editions of Homer are attributed to Rhianus and to Aratus (the latter described as a διόρθωσις); and while the earliest of the editions of Homer by the three big names in Hellenistic scholarship, that of Zenodotus, may or may not be reflected in the poetry of Callimachus and Apollonius, it apparently elicited a response from Apollonius – though whether it was a neutral or a hostile one is impossible to be certain from the title (Πρὸς Ζηνόδοτον could mean “to” or “against”).<sup>12</sup>

The result is a type of poetry which is sensitive to the philological issues raised by the Homeric text. It reproduces rarities, often reflecting their frequency in the Homeric text. It fills out incomplete paradigms. It offers interpretations or glosses of controversial words, sometimes reproducing each of the meanings of a word of disputed or multiple sense. And it takes a stand on *crucēs* and controverted points in the Homeric text, implicitly advocating one interpretation or reading instead of another. Callimachus’ *Hecale* is full of examples.<sup>13</sup> As a miniaturisation of the *Odyssey* (among other things) its language is considerably closer to Homer than that of Callimachus’ other works, which makes it a particularly good instance of how the various facets of the Homerising enterprise – evocation, imitation with variation, and precise philological engagement – all complement each other. One small example, this time from the *Aitia*: fr. 78 ὥφελος οὐλοῖον ἔγχος (“if only the destructive sword”, transl. Harder) echoes a familiar Homeric formula (ὄβριμον ἔγχος) but replaces the epithet with a learned Hellenistic variation on a notorious Homeric puzzle-word (οὐλος), and in combination with ὥφελος, “would that”, it also manages to recall the deprecation of the Argo’s sailing from the beginning of Euripides’ *Medea*. Better still, Euphorion out-Homers Homer in order to pay tribute to him. By describing him as ἀπροτίμαστος (fr. 118 P.), “untouchable”, he recycles and reinterprets (or “resemantises”) a Homeric *hapax legomenon*. Homer had applied the epithet to Briseis, meaning that she was “undefiled” (*Il.* 19.263), but for Euphorion Homer himself is beyond all approach.

10 Matthews (1996) 46–51, and his fr. 165–88.

11 For Philitas, see Lightfoot (2009) 4–5; Dettori (2000) 27–28; for Simias, fr. 29–32 Fraenkel, of which fr. 29 is taken from *Od.* 18.300.

12 West (1998) 41–45; Rengakos (1993) 9–10, and Index s.v. Zenodot von Ephesos.

13 Hollis (1990) 11–13.

So much by way of preparing the ground for the main discussion, that of the pervasive influence of Homeric epic on Hellenistic poetry. Its ubiquity – extending well beyond epic itself – is often accounted for by the theory of “Crossing of Genres.”<sup>14</sup> As the following discussion will suggest, the term is helpful only to a very limited extent, for it tends to mask very different kinds of interaction between genres. For instance, a formal experiment like an unfamiliar combination of metre and dialect (e.g., hexameters in the Doric dialect instead of standard epic-Ionic) is a very different proposition from the interfusion of one genre, which remains recognisably itself, with aspects of another (for example, Apollonian epic imbued with elements of lyric, tragedy, or historiography), and different again from the emergence of a new genre like bucolic out of individually-recognisable older elements whose reconfiguration remains nevertheless without precedent. The following discussion will clarify these claims.

## 2 The Legacy of Epic

The notion that the most famous Hellenistic poets represent an anti-epic, anti-Homeric *avant garde*, and that their surviving works – in fact the majority of surviving Hellenistic poetry – should be interpreted in a framework in which the traditionalists vie with the radicals has received a steady battering over the last couple of decades, although so far it has stubbornly refused to die. It is fostered by a propensity for attitudinising, for manifestos, and for polemic for which the highly articulate community of scholar-poets in Alexandria was particularly notorious. And yet it is far from easy to extract firm principles or commitments from *jeux-d'esprit* and flourishes that prove extremely elusive. Callimachus' critics (according to him) accuse him of failing to write long poems about kings and heroes, to whom he responds with a stated preference for brevity, craftsmanship, and euphony (*Aitia*, fr. 1). Elsewhere he has Apollo reject the muddy Euphrates for pure springs (*Hymn* 2.105–12). But to what do these terms refer?<sup>15</sup> It is tempting, but too much at risk of putting words into their mouths, to read into them the terms of controversies in which later figures were embroiled, as when Erycius alleges (but how ingenuously?) that the latter-day Callimachean, Parthenius, poured scorn on the Homeric

14 Kroll (1924) 202–224.

15 For Williams (1978, 85–89), Envy's reference in l. 106 to the sea (πόντος) as a symbol for copiousness implies the ancient notion of Homer as the Ocean, though Apollo, in his reply, does not disparage Homer himself; see *contra* Cameron (1995) 403–407.

poems (*AP* 7.377 = *Garland* XIII), and others (but how reliably?) that Hadrian demoted Homer and provocatively championed Antimachus.<sup>16</sup>

In the first place, not only Hellenistic poetry but ancient literary criticism in general is much given to statements of critical principle and aesthetic theory in which Homer, or his imitators, or poetry with a Homeric aesthetic, figures as one half of an antithesis. This tendency is antecedent to Hellenistic poetry, but the Homeric epics themselves are in no way disparaged. For instance, in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Aeschylus is the one with Homeric qualities<sup>17</sup> in the duel with Euripides, where the contrast turns on the archaic and the up-to-date. Euripides' poetics of craftsmanship and urbanity are destined to prevail in the long term, and in the Hellenistic period poets of course reiterate their commitment to the small, exquisite, and highly-wrought. But neither in Aristophanes is the "Homeric" tragedian allowed to suffer detriment and lose the contest, nor in the Hellenistic poets themselves is the corollary spelled out, that Homeric poetry itself is aesthetically objectionable. Rather, the issue may be made to turn on inept Homeric *imitation*, as when Lycidas in Theocritus' programmatic seventh *Idyll* attacks "the builder who seeks to raise a house as high as the peak of Mount Oromedon, and the cocks of the Muses who crow against the Chian bard [i.e., Homer] and waste their labour" (*Id.* 7.45–48), and at an (uncertain) later date, Pollianus denounces the cyclic poets as opposed to the elegists Callimachus and Parthenius (*AP* 11.130).

In the second place, it is increasingly hard to rest content with the traditional picture of an ocean of conservative Homerisers from which the élite, the innovators, emerge like a streak of foam on the crest of the billows beneath them. The latter used to be thought the vast majority. Alan Cameron laid siege to that notion, though here and there scraps of inert stuff can be found, Homeric enough to please the most conservative palate.<sup>18</sup> The suggestion has also been made that Callimachus' *bêtes-noires* in the *Aitia* prologue were actually composers of encomiastic elegies (not epics) celebrating the military prowess of contemporary rulers, some of which hack-work was no doubt (which of course implies doubt!) Homerising in quality.<sup>19</sup> Be all this as it may, there is no basis

16 Dio 69.4.6 = *Suda* s.v. Ἀδριανός (α 527), Antim. Test. 30 Matthews ... τὸν γοῦν Ὅμηρον καταλύων Ἀντίμαχον ἀντ' αὐτοῦ ἐστήγεν (cf. Bowie (2004) 173: "silly gossip").

17 He is credited with Homeric wrath (803–4, 814, 844, 855–56, 994, 998, 1006), given the epithet of Homeric Zeus (814), and adorned with elemental and bestial imagery from Homeric similes (e.g. 822–25, 848, 852, 859, 902–4). In Athen. *Deipn.* 8.347 E Aeschylus is said to have called his plays scraps from the great banquet of Homer.

18 Cameron (1995) 263–302; Bing (1988) 50–56, adducing *SH* 946–47 (Rhianus?); see too Harder (2012) 34.

19 Barbantani (2002–3) 29–47.

for the essentially modern myth that Apollonius and Callimachus quarrelled over the issue of epic poetry. Sources that suggest lack of amity between the two men are Byzantine,<sup>20</sup> and none goes so far as to suggest that there was a quarrel that turned on poetic theory. Attempts to force ancient evidence into the procrustean model of traditionalists *versus* moderns are now a thing of the past. Rather, the two contemporaries were engaged in projects that could only have been formulated in a highly sophisticated environment, whether they involve radical shifts within the epic voice, cultivated games with its language, or transvaluation and the promotion of alternative aesthetic values.

Apollonius' *Argonautica*, in four long books with a total of almost 6,000 lines, falls not far short of half the length of the *Odyssey* (12,110 lines). It is by far our longest Hellenistic poem, and clearly stakes out its claim to represent multi-book hexameter epic in the old epic-Ionic idiom. The subject-matter is heroic (the Argonauts' quest for the fleece, against a backdrop of interested Olympian gods), the narrative technique derivative from Homer's (the invocation of a Muse or Muses; counterfactuals; divisions of time – at least, *some* of the time; prolepsis and analepsis), while other narrative conventions are recognisably Homeric, such as the practice of giving the background history of an object that will prove significant (3.845–68, 4.424–34). This is clearly a stunningly sophisticated engagement with archaic epic. Here we will concentrate on just some of its features.

The first is a radical rethinking of formulaic composition. The bard of primary epic leaned on verbal formulae, repetitional devices, set sequences, and “type scenes” for ease of composition. The Alexandrian can treat them as one element to be juggled or jettisoned alongside all the other literary riches available to him. The literary nature of the undertaking, as opposed to its organic growth from a living oral tradition, is evident in the tendency to offer one showpiece example of a given Homeric feature (thus, one showpiece divine scene on Olympus to open book three), and for the most part eschews verbal repetition.<sup>21</sup> A Homeric type-scene or stock situation may be evoked, but with a minimum of formulaic rigmarole. For example, a hospitality sequence is deployed for the arrival of Jason and the sons of Phrixus at Aeetes' palace, with a bath and a meal followed by questions (3.270–73, 299–316, but this time fully individuated by the bull sacrifice (NB Aeetes' animals!). The firing of a weapon becomes a show-piece when Eros' bow-shot wounds Medea. Instead of formulae and types, what Apollonian narrative tends to offer in their place

20 Cameron (1995) 227.

21 For repetition in Apollonius, Elderkin (1913) 198–201; Vian (1973) 98–99; Fantuzzi (2008) 221–241, esp. pp. 230–231.

are patterns of another sort, of motif and theme, sometimes brought into focus by the repetition of thematically significant words, but not by formulae: as we shall see, helplessness (ἀμηχανία) and guile, plotting, and deception (δόλος, μῆτις, and derivatives) are among the poem's recurrent notions. Similarly, gesture is far less formalised than in Homer. Supplicating Medea, Chalciope clasps her knees in the traditional way but also sinks her head on her breast as the scene develops into an intimate and emotive encounter of two suffering sisters (3.706–7). Aphrodite draws Eros' cheeks towards her and kisses him (3.149–50). Medea takes Jason's right hand (as her Homeric counterpart in the corresponding scene had not), perhaps reminding us that the right hand is involved in oaths (3.1067–68), and later she sits with her cheek resting on her own hand (3.1160). Non-verbal communication is a good deal more developed too, with many references to smiles, tears, eyes timidly downcast or sensationally meeting. A contrasting approach to the use of Homeric convention, however, might be observed in Jason's yoking of the bulls at the end of the third book, where simile follows simile in an extraordinary escalation of the Homeric practice of clustering similes at moments of high tension (*Il.* 2.455–83, 15.592 ff., 17.722 ff.). It cannot be called "parody", which in ancient literature usually refer to the reapplication of form to new and incongruous content, but might be described as Homer overdone or overdosed, Homer on stilts.

Second, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are of course ambitiously rewritten, with the Colchis sequence in the third book based on Odysseus' arrival in Scheria and his truncated romance with its princess. The sheer scale of this rewriting makes it impossible to follow in all its tiny and rewarding attention to detail, but a few points stand out. First is the sheer scope that the Homeric subtext offers to intensify meaning. In this case it cannot but function to generate irony, because of the utterly different outcome of the two plot-lines. In both cases a handsome stranger meets father and eligible daughter. In the one, she is willing, he complacent, but Odysseus unavailable. In the other, however, she defies her tyrannical parent to elope with the stranger, a disaster whose shock-waves continue to spread for years to come. Second is the polyphony of the rewriting. Scheria may be the main model, but many others are in use simultaneously, such as a running suggestion that equates Aeetes with Odysseus' nightmare host, the Cyclopes. In particular, the use of multiple models for Medea (Nausicaa, along with suggestions of Helen, of Circe, of Penelope, and of others) enables the creation of a character who is complex, conflicted, and whose story still has several possible outcomes. Virgil will use the same polyphonic technique when he rewrites epic for himself, and in particular when he revises the Scheria sequence for Aeneas' arrival in Carthage, although I

would suggest that his intertexts function more to fabricate situation than to construct character. In the *Argonautica* they are perhaps more purposeful in this respect. They enable measurement of the gulf that separates the two princesses, the *ingénue* from the maiden whose capacity for menace is already so clear.

We might note that alongside his intensive use of Homer Apollonius has also invested his narrative with an ethos that seems to owe much to the spirit of cyclic epic, although actual borrowings are hard to spot because of the dearth of surviving material. But one still notes the prominence of magic, an atmosphere in which the sub-Olympian supernatural, the uncanny and irrational, is more prominent than it is in the *Odyssey* (let alone the austere *Iliad*), in which the heroes have to deal with a series of monstrous adversaries (unlike the sympathetic fellow-combatants of the *Iliad*), and in which treachery and atrocity take place. There is also a notable interest in experiments in indirect speech.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, if such features are to be recognised as a cyclic inflection of Homeric epic, the *Argonautica* is also permeated with aspects of other genres which make it reasonable to consider the poem a more radical experiment in the hybridisation of the epic genre itself. As indicated above, I should prefer to avoid the expression “crossing of genres” in favour of something like infusion or transfusion. Epic remains the main mode, but it is permeated by others, such as historiography or ethnography (3.200–9), and by the geographical genre of the *periplus* or coastal voyage, tracing the Argonauts’ passage along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Above all, in the third book it famously receives an erotic character.

This comes about in several ways. First is the eroticisation of originally martial material. For instance, Medea’s indecision in 3.654–55 is modelled on the epic sequence “three times ... and on the fourth”, where (typically) Apollo brings an end to a series of military assaults. Here it is interiorised in all senses, translated to a girl’s chamber and turned into an entirely psychological crisis. The hexameter vocabulary of poetic seduction and delight (θέλγειν, τέρπειν) is converted into an erotic register, too. But the eroticisation is also achieved by an enormous dose of archaic lyric, especially Sappho, whose famous poem (fr. 31 Voigt φαίνεται μοι) on the physiological effects of love is reworked time and time again for Medea’s reaction to Jason. Echoes of tragedy can also be heard, as when the *schetliasmos* of love in 4.445–48 σχετλί’ Ἔρως surely recalls choral commentary at Eur. *Hipp.* 525–29 (note κορύσσο ~ ἐπιστρατεύση) and *Med.* 629–35 (where love shoots arrows) – as well as echoing Theogn. 1231. These two

22 Griffin (1977) 39–53, esp. pp. 40–41, 45–47, 49–50.

methods – eroticised epic and lyric infusion – readily come together. Consider a simile in which Jason and Medea, when they meet, are compared to oaks or pines in the mountains which begin to rustle when the wind shakes them (3.967–71). In the first instance, the simile recalls the two Lapiths in the *Iliad* who are like mountain oaks that stand facing wind and rain (*Il.* 12.131–34). But the onset of the wind (which in the *Iliad* is a force that the oaks must permanently confront) also evokes the lyric notion of the gale force of love (Sappho fr. 47 Voigt; Ibycus, *PMG* 286.8–13). A little later (3.1019–21), Medea’s heart melts like the dew on roses, just as Menelaus’ melts like dew on the ears of ripening corn (*Il.* 23.597–99): the rose, Sappho’s classic erotic flower, is substituted for the agricultural crop, and Apollonius adds the verb *τήχασθαι*, the classic term for “melting” with desire. Indeed, the action-similes applied to Jason at the end of the third book are counterpoised by a remarkable series of mental-state similes – an unusual type in Homer – offering insight into the intensity and conflictedness of Medea’s feelings (3.291–95, 656–63, 756–59; 4.35–39, 1062–65). The result of all these refinements is that the famous “objectivity” of the epic voice (never more than a half-truth at the best of times) is now distinctly subjectivised, another sophistication that Virgil will inherit. One of its tokens is a narrative voice which is far more interventionist and emotive than that of the traditional epic narrator, commenting, interjecting, and eliciting reaction in a way that reflects the greater emotional charge of his narrative.

There have been rather fruitless attempts to claim Jason as a new kind of hero, a “love hero”.<sup>23</sup> It is obvious that he is different kind of figure from Achilles and Hector. It is not merely a matter of military prowess, but also of the entire presentation of character. Jason is not the poem’s ethical centre of gravity (either occupying it or challenging it). He has no momentous decision to make, no dilemma to wrestle with, little suffering, and no basis on which to be tragic. On the contrary, the character endowed with articulacy, interiority, and conflictedness, the character we see struggle and make difficult choices, is Medea, and her situation is framed in erotic terms. It is clear from a series of contrasts with more conventional heroes (the coarsely macho Idas; Peleus and Telamon, who prefigure their heroic offspring in the generation of the Trojan war<sup>24</sup>) that a contrast is intended with the model of the “action man”. It is also

23 Much bibliography in Mary M. De Forest, *Apollonius’ Argonautica* (Leiden, 1994), p. 47 n. 1; Hunter (1993) 15–25.

24 Idas: 3.556–66; Peleus: 2.1217–25, 3.504–15 (playing the role of Iliadic Diomedes as he grasps the initiative), 2.878–93 (contrasting with Jason’s defeatism); Telamon: 1.1286–95 (impetuosity contrasting with Jason’s resourcelessness), 3.382–85 (vehemence contrasting with Jason’s diplomacy).



true that he is prone to ἀμυχανία – but then, so are the Argonauts collectively, so too Medea,<sup>25</sup> and so too even the narrator, who has quite a different relationship with the Muses and degree of control over his narrative than his Homeric forebear.<sup>26</sup> But it is not the case that Jason lacks a Homeric counterpart, for he stands in recognisable continuity with the articulate and wily Odysseus (as well as with his own earlier smooth-talking self, above all the smooth and persuasive hero of Pindar's fourth *Pythian*). He is often associated with flattering, cozening words.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, he uses his craftiness to more equivocal effect than the Homeric Odysseus, for Apollonius not only develops the *Odyssey's* interest in deceptive speech but also anticipates Euripides' play, whose heroine rails at him for mendacity and oath-breaking. This form of implicit external prolepsis, by presuming on the reader's awareness of a classic text that formed the sequel, is of course qualitatively different from any effect which the Homeric bard can achieve (except insofar as he may pre-empt the plots of other cyclic poems which supplied sequels to his own).

Be that as it may, guile is a pervasive theme in the *Argonautica*.<sup>28</sup> In some ways the set-up is simpler than the *Odyssey*, in others more complicated. It is simpler because, in the *Odyssey*, there are many sorts of intelligence in addition to Odyssean μῆτις (even the Phaeacians' ships have a nautical intelligence of their own); the *Argonautica* narrows this down to cunning intelligence. It is

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- 25 Jason: 1.460, cf. 535, 1286; 2.409–18, 885–93; 3.422–23; 4.1318. The Argonauts: 1.1053; 2.577–78, 681, 860; 3.504; 4.825, 880, 1259 (Ancaeus), 1308, 1701. Medea: 3.772, 951, 1157; 4.107, 1049.
- 26 Invocations of the Muse(s) at the beginnings of books retreat from assertiveness (1.22, where they are *his* interpreters) to *aporia* and dependence (4.1–5, cf. 1381–82). Elsewhere their role varies: they are monitresses at whose prompting a misapprehension is corrected in 2.844–45; in 4.552–56 they are invoked but what follows is apparently the poet's conjecture (cf. 557 πού), and in 4.984–85 they tolerate a story rather than inspire it. Erato's name is connected with the loveliness of song (Hes. *Th.* 65, 70), but (like other poetological vocabulary: see above) is reinterpreted in erotic terms in 3.1–5.
- 27 His speech characteristically μείλιχος: 1.294; 2.621; 3.319, 385, 1102; 4.394; cf. 2.1196; 3.396, 974, 985, 1141, 1146; 4.410; compare Pind. *P.* 4.101, 136–38. Vocabulary associated in early Greek hexameter poetry with alluring, sometimes deceptive, speech and song are applied to him and the effect of his words, especially on Medea: 3.458, 3.982–83, 1140–41. When Hera beautifies him, it is not, as in Homer, confined to his physical appearance, but extends to his speech (3.923).
- 28 δόλος and μῆτις and their derivatives are especially prominent. Divinities: 3.12, 24, 30, 210, 1134. Jason: 3.184, 4.404, cf. 3.426 κερδαλέοισιν. Argus: 3.475. Chalciope: 3.668. Medea *passim* (partly punning on her name), e.g., 3.89, 687, 720, 743, 781, 912, 1026; cf. 3.1168 δῆνεα, 1364 Μηδείης πολυκερδέος; 4.416 μείλιξω, 442 παραιφάμενη, 456 δολωθείς; Jason and Medea together: 4.421. Aeetes: 3.373, 578, 592, 599 (his accusations against others reflect his own thinking). See also αἰψύλιος in 1.792 (Hypsipyle), 3.51 (Aphrodite).

more complicated precisely because *everyone* shares this cunning intelligence and everyone is trying to outwit everyone else, all of the time. In sum, we lack a moral compass to guide us through this unreassuring world, in which the old heroic values put in fitful, unreliable appearances, and guile is the only constant presence. When Jason woos Medea, he pays court to her using old-fashioned vocabulary. She will be honoured and revered by men and women (3.1123 τιμήσσοι γυναῖξιν καὶ ἀνδράσιν αἰδοίη τε); he will celebrate her κλέος throughout Greece (3.992; on the only two other occasions when the word is used in the poem it means “report”). The Homeric system is no longer what underpins the poem and gives it meaning: it has been relegated, if it appears at all, to chivalrous (and dubiously sincere) compliment. Continuities remain recognisable, but discontinuities are such that the revivals, when they occur, often serve more as markers of distance.

Still, an epic is what it remains, and Apollonius’ approach might be contrasted with that of other works where epic appears among the ingredients but is no longer the dominant genre. Bucolic is one example. Parts of the *Aitia* could be mentioned, too, which, in the course of what is formally an elegiac poem, evokes a variety of genres, whether *in extenso* or more episodically. The second *aition* of the first book, which also concerns the Argonauts, evokes a number of formal features of epic, and is narrated by its Muse: consider the initial accusative noun(s) stating the topic, the motif of “memory”, the use of ἀρχεσθαι to open the narrative, speech formulae (fr. 7c,5–10), and later an elaborate dawn formula (fr. 21.3–4). Even more sophisticatedly, within a formal evocation of a Pindaric victory ode at the opening of the third book, Annette Harder draws attention to more epic (or in this case mock-epic) elements in the story of the peasant Molorchus’ entertainment of Heracles, who was on his way to kill the Nemean lion. These include a time-indication and simile (fr. 54c, 5–11), philological niceties (fr. 54c,5–6, the αὔλιος ἀστήρ) and of course the *presque homérique* style (e.g., fr. 54c,14 ξείνοις κωκυμούς; 54i,17] .θυμὸν ἀρε[σάμενος), a leisurely narrative pace including considerable direct speech, and a hospitality scene recalling the Eumaeus episode in the *Odyssey* – whose fascination for Callimachus we shall consider shortly. What Callimachus shares with Apollonius is the art of fusion. But instead of an epic base, we find epic formal features and a (mock-)epic ethos employed for a myth within an *Ersatz* epinician erected on a neutral elegiac base – a veritable game of Chinese boxes.

We also find it much reduced, of course. This is indeed an abiding concern of Hellenistic poets, and it is easy to point to epyllion, the diminutive of *epos*, as a realisation of the principle that small is beautiful. Epyllion, however, is an amorphous and problematic category – a modern one, too, so that we may well be shadow-boxing with an entity not perceived as distinct in antiquity at all.

Among Hellenistic narrative poems that occupy a single book or less, there is no intrinsic and invariable relationship with epic: it is not the case that they are all Homer writ small. Archaic and classical poetry offered many other models for short self-contained mythological narratives, including the *Homeric Hymns*, segments of the *Catalogue of Women*, mythological stories in lyric, and narrative *exempla* which occur in many genres including sympotic elegy. Some poems placed in the category of epyllion look to have their main affiliations with genres other than epic, though forms are never pure. Even a poem like Theocritus' *Hylas* (*Id.* 13), formally an illustrative *exemplum*, and very lyric in ethos, contains epic elements including a couple of similes and indications of times of day, as well as a basic epic dialect inflected with Doric elements. But let us concentrate on the most Homeric of all the epyllia that survive.

Callimachus' *Hecale* is a homage to the *Odyssey*. Though it miniaturises it, it was itself substantial enough<sup>29</sup> for the scholiast on *Hymn* 2.106 to treat it as a μέγα ποίημα, written to prove to his critics that Callimachus had sufficient stamina. Whether or not it had any such polemical intent is quite uncertain. The discovery of the first line established once and for all that it had no opening manifesto to match that of the *Aitia*. At the same time, its techniques and theme, which has significant points of contact with the *Argonautica*, are quite enough to wreck any simple opposition between "Homerisers" and moderns, and between Apollonius' approach to the Homeric legacy and that of Callimachus.

Like the Molorchus story in the *Victoria Berenices*, the *Hecale* reworks books 14–17 of the *Odyssey*, where Eumaeus entertains his incognito master in a show of exemplary behaviour in humble surroundings. The character-type is also represented by the hospitable Axylos who gets a cameo mention in *Il.* 6.12–15 (compare his death-notice with *Hecale's* in fr. 80.3–5 Hollis): both were wont to entertain "all" passing wayfarers, though Axylos was rich and *Hecale* quite the reverse. Moreover, just as the *Odyssey* poet produced an extended meditation on the hospitality theme which he offset by spectacular counter-examples – the Cyclopes who ate his guests (9.288–98), and Heracles who slew them (21.27–30), Callimachus seems to have proceeded in the same way, if indeed it is the case that Theseus described how, on his journey from Troezen to Attica, he encountered the loathsome Sciron, who used to force his guests to wash his feet before pitching them over a precipice.<sup>30</sup> Above all, he engages closely with the Eumaeus books, from which he takes the details of spreading a humble

29 For estimates of length, see Hollis (1990) 337–340.

30 Fr. 60 Hollis, which Hollis suggests, *contra* Pfeiffer, pertains to Theseus' washing of Sciron's feet rather than *Hecale's* washing of Theseus'.

couch for the guest on arrival (fr. 29–30), splitting logs (fr. 32) (the bathing of the hero's feet is taken from the Eurycleia scene later on), and then, after the meal (for Eumaeus' boar-sacrifice Callimachus substitutes a minutely-itemised vegetarian supper), a long narrative by the host of his/her life-story which, although the details differ, involves a *peripeteia*: s/he was not always poor. This close attention to detail is matched by a closer adherence to Homer's language than Callimachus displays in his other works.<sup>31</sup> Adrian Hollis draws particular attention to fr. 74.22, where Callimachus has tessellated two Odyssean passages linked by a common phrase. *Cento* is a technique employed by other poets, but it is rare in Callimachus, and testifies to his wish to create a Homeric effect. An effect, but *not* a pastiche – for the poem is also infused with vocabulary culled from Attic comedy, whether directly or from a monograph or glossary, in order to heighten local colour.<sup>32</sup> Observe how many of the borrowings are common nouns, creating a truly tangible environment and sense of particularism and quiddity.

Narrative technique also derives from Homer. Quite unlike the intrusive presence in the *Aitia* or the *Hymns*, the narrator is unforthcoming; what little intervention there is in keeping with the epic manner (perhaps apostrophe in fr. 15 Hollis τῷ). Similes are rare in what survives of Callimachus, but in *Hecale* there were at least three (fr. 18.13 ff., 48.7 ff., 69.11–12). Above all, there is a timespan of limited compass. There are two days, whose divisions are marked in the Homeric manner, largely taken up with the narration of various kinds of life-story (Theseus', Hecale's – and now, also, that of a comically garrulous crow), just as Odysseus' (fake) life-story was followed by that of Eumaeus in *Odyssey* 14–15. (As if to make sure we don't miss the correspondence of the basic structure, fr. 74.21f. echoes *Od.* 15.493–5, where the conversationalists finally, briefly, go to sleep.) But this is sprung open by proleptic and analeptic inserts to give the impression that the narrative encompasses a great deal more than the small segment of the present. These breaches seem to have included retrospectives by the poet (Aegeus' instructions to Aethra; Theseus' youth in Troezen), but also narratives by characters (Theseus' to Hecale about his journey to Athens; Hecale's life-story). The effect, narratologically speaking, is similar to that of the *Odyssey*, in which a dense narrative of a strictly delimited period is opened up by the narrator's ingenuity to cast an eye forwards and backwards over an expanded field. But where the archaic poet had cast his glance over the Trojan War and its aftermath, as it affected many people

31 See Hollis on his fr. 32 and Cameron (1995) 441.

32 Hollis (1990) 9, 13.

other than the protagonists, and did so using story-telling extensions of himself, Callimachus offers a spectacularly bizarre and humorous alternative in the form of the aforementioned crow (shades here of other eccentric internal narrators). The crow discourses on Attic prehistory (the daughters of Cecrops and Erichthonius, Athena's acquisition of Attica, the exclusion of crows from the Acropolis) and anticipates the future fate of her interlocutor, a raven. By modelling the crow's prediction on Achilles' prophecy of his own death (fr. 74.14 ~ *Il.* 21.111), Callimachus both acknowledges the literary source of the technique of prolepsis and marks his distance from his model. Digressions are often held to characterise the epyllion, but they work in very different ways: this one packs an antiquarian poem with even more lovingly-assembled detail on Attic antiquities. In short, in the *Hecale* Callimachus employs different aspects of his heritage – epic, Attic Comedy, Atthidography, paradoxography – to further a coherent vision. The result is a highly attractive and influential symbiosis of ethical traditionalism, folktale, erudite wit, and modernist narrative experiment.

It is tempting to suppose that we can give an account of the *Hecale*'s rationale and Callimachus' *modus operandi*, despite the poem's fragmentary condition and Callimachus' notorious unpredictability. Ironically this seems harder with another work that survives in its entirety, (ps.-?)Theocritus, *Id.* 25 (*Heracles Leontophonos*). It is at least clear that it, too, offers a reduced version of epic, but does so in a different way, presenting three self-contained extracts from a larger whole (the cleansing of the Augean stables, Heracles' fifth labour) which is never told in its entirety. Rhapsodic recitation has often been suggested as the model for the unusual form – compare the Odyssean Demodocus, selecting where to begin within a larger corpus (8.500) – while drama may form an additional model at least for the first and third extracts, which contain direct speech (the second is pure narrative).<sup>33</sup> The loss of previous Heracles epics has left much of the background enigmatic, but the debt to Homer is clear, with yet more borrowings from the Eumaeus episode in the first extract,<sup>34</sup> the second extract sharing a sub-heading with part of *Iliad* 4,<sup>35</sup> a couple of Homerising similes in the second and third extracts from that very section of the *Iliad* (both exhibiting the characteristic technique of dovetailing two passages linked by

33 Hunter and Fantuzzi (2004) 210–215; Hunter (1998) 115–132 = Hunter (2008) 290–310.

34 68–77 ~ *Od.* 14.29–38, 526–27 + *Od.* 16.8–10.

35 *Il.* 4.223–421 ΕΠΙΠΛΩΗΣΙΣ (“Review” or “Inspection”; by Agamemnon of his troops, by Augeas of his herds).

shared phraseology<sup>36</sup>), and of course the *presque homérique* style. The piece is intriguing and nicely constructed, with a crescendo effect that builds from (Eumaeus) guard-dogs through a prize bull (the climax of the *epipoleis*), to the Nemean lion itself. Yet it is hard to be persuaded that we have found the key that unlocks it. The rewriting of Homer, or even beliefs, however eccentric, about Homeric performance practice, are unlikely to be such a key, although a combination of that with dramatic form is more persuasive. As we shall see, other Theocritean *Idylls* experiment with a composite of epic/narrative form and dramatic/mimetic content.

### 3 Epic Affiliates: Didactic, Bucolic

This section considers a couple of genres which are related to epic, or indeed are regarded as epic *tout court* according to the ancient principle of classification by metre.<sup>37</sup> They used the hexameter, and that was enough to draw them into the ranks of the *epos*.

Didactic is the older. Its founding father was Hesiod, but in practice Hellenistic didactic writers are poised between him and Homer. Nicander begins his *Theriaca* with an allusion to Hesiod (albeit to a myth which the extant Hesiod does not narrate) and ends it with a *sphragis* asserting himself as “Homeric” (*Ther.* 10–12, 957). The *Lives* of Aratus engage in a rather pointless debate about whether to regard their subject as more Homeric or more Hesiodic (Vit. 1, p. 9.10–18, II p. 12.15–18, IV p. 21.7–8 Martin). When, according to Callimachus, Aratus set out to recreate the sweetest aspects of Hesiod’s style (Call. *Ep.* 27 = *AP* 9.507 = *HE* LVI), he nevertheless does so in standard epic language. He even seems in the main to eschew Hesiodic peculiarities and has a pronounced liking for Homeric rarities instead.<sup>38</sup> So too, Nicander’s (admittedly very idiosyncratic) idiom owes more to Homer’s language than it does to Hesiod’s: assured Hesiodisms are few and far between, whereas Homerisms are legion.<sup>39</sup> This is not simply a matter of the inescapability of Homer’s influence, nor even of the

36 89–95 ~ *Il.* 4.274–79 + 422–26 (94 ~ *Il.* 4.274 κορυσέσθην, 4.424 κορύσσεται).

37 Pöhlmann (1983) 820–825; Halperin (1983) 18–19, 212–216; Volk (2002) 29.

38 Of the 278 words which feature in Johannes Paulson’s *Index Hesiodeus* (Lund, 1890) as non-Homeric, only a dozen recur in the *Phaenomena*, and of the exclusively Hesiodic formulae listed by West (1966) 78–79, not one makes its way into the later poem. For Aratus’ Homerisms and pseudo-Homerisms, see too Kroll, *RE* s.v. Lehrgedicht, coll. 1849.7–1850.12; Kidd (1997) 23–25.

39 Jacques (2002) cvi–cix, and (2007) xciii–xcv.

affiliation of epic and didactic *via* their common metre. It is also warranted by the ancient regard for Homer as the father of didactic as well as of everything else. It followed from his omnicompetence. Strabo, for one, bears witness to a debate that went back to the Hellenistic period, one side of which attributed to him expertise in matters as diverse as geography, generalship, agriculture, and rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> So when it comes to literary influence, while both authors furnish aspects of catalogue technique such as structuring devices and listing techniques, which were to prove endlessly fascinating to Hellenistic poets, Hesiod's further contribution includes mythography and facets of a narratorial personality, while Homer furnishes the linguistic base. And this means not merely the dry details or phonology, morphology, and syntax, nor even a supply of rarities, but also the contexts in which those words were embedded, with all of the scope for sophisticated and playful effects of allusion and combination which that entails.

Bucolic, a highly composite genre that was new in the Hellenistic period, presents a much more complex case. Of its various aspects, I deal first with the simultaneous presence of elements derived from epic and from drama, in different proportions in each poem. This variegation is acknowledged in an ancient taxonomy which holds that bucolic contains examples of "narrative", "dramatic", and "mixed" modes.<sup>41</sup> Theocritus' *Idylls* (the title itself, which means "specimens of poems of different types", already implies variety) are full of the interchange of speech and song. Two sources of variation are whether these are set within a frame (narrative in *Id.* 6 and 18), and whether the speakers' words are introduced and terminated by speech formulae, as in epic, or are presented directly and mimetically, as in drama. Complicatedly, other considerations cut across this. For instance, a purely mimetic poem such as *Id.* 2, a monologue by a highly-characterised first-person speaker, may nevertheless be full of epic allusions and resonances. For after the speaker, who is embarking on a magic procedure, has moved through initial instructions and ritual incantations to review her love-affair, she does so in a style which invests betrayal in urban back-streets with epic grandeur.<sup>42</sup>

Another consideration is the relation of dialect and content. Homeric language and epic subject-matter are distributed unevenly across the collection.

40 Strab. 1.1.2, 1.2.3 (= Roller (2010) fr.2, and pp. 112–114); Hillgruber (1994) 4–35 "Homer als Quelle allen Wissens".

41 *Scholia ad Hes. Op. (Prol. Procl.)* p. 5.8–21 ed. Gaisford; Probus, *comm. in Ecl., praef.* 329.10–16 Hagen; Pöhlmann (1983) 827–828.

42 E.g. 64–65 πόθεν ... ἐκ τίνος ἄρξωμαι; possibly the verse-initial verb in asyndeton in 66 to begin a story; 82 ~ *Il.* 14.294; 112 ~ *Il.* 3.217; 147–48, dawn formula.

There are Doric idylls portraying rustic life which have different degrees of Homerism, and there are poems with epic subject-matter, two of which (22, 25) are in epic dialect, while that of the rest is mixed with Doric elements.<sup>43</sup> There is no necessary correlation between a given poem's degree of linguistic epicism and either its form (epic/dramatic) or its content. For instance, *Id.* 1, another purely dramatic/mimetic poem, is also among those with the highest degree of Homeric linguistic colouring. The Cyclopes' serenade for Galatea (*Id.* 11), despite the Homeric subject-matter, is the least linguistically Homeric of the Doric poems, yet when a couple of herdsmen return to the subject and sing a pair of matching songs about Polyphemus, one even in his own voice, this (*Id.* 6) is among the *most* Homerising of the poems. It is, however, notable that linguistic Homerising tend to marry up quite closely with adherence to Callimachean metrical rules, so that Homerism and Callimacheanism would certainly not appear to be at odds with one another in Theocritus' rule-book.<sup>44</sup> Both should perhaps be seen as signifiers of refinement as opposed to lack of sophistication, whence the low ranking on both scales of the Cyclopes in *Id.* 11 and the reapers in *Id.* 10.

We turn now to the Homeric antecedents of the bucolic mode. If any archaic material provided more substantial antecedents (Stesichorean lyric? sub-literary herdsmen's songs?), it has been lost, and no attempt is being made here to claim epic as a dominant source. But the *Shield of Achilles* and its descendant, the Hesiodic *Scutum*, furnished rustic scenes (of which more below), and the *Odyssey* a particular spot, transitional between town and country, whose elements (spring, nymphs, grove of trees) are taken over for a second, and far more enigmatic, encounter between a traveller and a goat-herd (*Od.* 17.204 ff. ~ *Id.* 7.6 ff.). The Odyssean Cyclopes is of particular significance, though by the time he reaches the Hellenistic poets the figure has been mediated through later classical and post-classical representations such as those of Epicharmus, Euripides, and Philoxenus (who gave him a girlfriend). The element of continuity is pastoralism. Beyond that there is no single overriding template or pattern. We find elaboration (the references to his mother in *Id.* 11.25–27, 67–71, come from *Od.* 1.71–73), realignment, and soft-peddalling of unwanted elements. The Golden Age coloration of the Homeric Cyclopes is replaced by something generic in a different way, the *locus amoenus* set in an idealised Sicilian countryside (*Id.* 11.45–48). Their defiance of ordered society and civilised convention is recast as solitary living at a low cultural level,

43 Di Benedetto (1956) 48–60; Dover (1971) xv–xvi.

44 Hunter (1999) 22. The same is true of Nicander: Magnelli (2004) 185–204 (pp. 198–201 on metre).



but the implied antithesis between Polyphemos and modern urban(e) life also applies to the whole bucolic universe. What is given new prominence is an element already embryonic in the *Odyssey*, when the blinded monster directs a self-pitying address to his ram: that is, comical, incongruous character depiction, which figures above all in his shambolic attempts at love-making. Note the stress on his youth and ineptitude, with fresh down on lips and temples (*Id.* 11.9). Instead of the frightful monster we now have a vulnerable adolescent, unsure of himself and vacillating between boasting and agonising self-consciousness. He has become a hero of *ethopoia*.

Finally, we should consider the poetics and aesthetics of bucolic as a response to Homer. Here, if anywhere, a case could be made for an attempt to erect a rival set of values. A fairly late example, ps.-Moschus' *Lament for Bion*, sets up a synkrisis between Homer and Bion, respectively poets of war and of rusticity and love (70–84).<sup>45</sup> This tendency to drive an opposition between epic and the more unpretending genre seems to develop over time, so that Virgil's sixth *Eclogue* begins with a *recusatio* of one genre for another. The first-generation Alexandrians did not go as far as to shun whole genres. Yet oppositions are there. On David Halperin's analysis, bucolic relates to traditional *epos* through the techniques of inversion (the application to lowly characters of heroic language and motifs, as we saw with Simaetha in *Id.* 2) and subversion (where the heroic is domesticated),<sup>46</sup> and to this we could add that of substitution – instead of Muses, nymphs; instead of a Shield, a carved cup; instead of bards, rustic poets (who do indeed behave a good deal like rhapsodes, both performing pre-composed pieces and improvising repartee,<sup>47</sup> and use the language of ἀοιδή and ἀείδειν). Throughout we find compounds and syntheses whose elements are in creative tension, Homerisms and Dorisms, grandeur and colloquialism.

It is striking that genres which surface for the first time in the Hellenistic period, and at first sight seem as remote as can be from the grandeur of epic, opt to represent and promote themselves in Homer or para-Homeric terms. As we have seen, the programmatic first *Idyll* offers a carved cup, a *kissybion*, as a response to Achilles' Shield. It contains three scenes which closely relate to the

45 See Manakidou (1996) 49–50, with further bibliography. Compare already the carved cup in *Id.* 1 which serves as a rustic analogue or challenge to Achilles' shield, and replaces the legal quarrel on the latter with a quarrel between two men over a woman (*Id.* 1.32–38; 35 νεικεῖουσ' ἐπέεσσι ~ *Il.* 18.497–98 νείκεος, ἐνείκεον).

46 Halperin (1983) 217–248.

47 Compare the types of exchange in the bucolic poems with those of Homer and Hesiod in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*: they both show off the best of their existing art and engage in quick-fire improvisation.

*Shield* (or the *Scutum*), of which the most extensive is the last. The boy plaiting a cricket-cage (52–53) answers to the scene where the vintage is being gathered in in woven baskets (*Il.* 18.568 *πλεκτοῖς ἐν τάλάροισι*), with weaving now invested with poetological overtones. The lyre with which Homer's young boy accompanies his agricultural ditty now reappears as pan-pipes, while the aesthetic implications of his high-pitched song (*Il.* 18.571 *λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ*) were not lost on the euphonist Callimachus, who recycled the rare epithet in the *Aitia* prologue (fr. 1.24). And if Theocritus draws on Homer for the lineaments of an emblem for his new genre, so, too, does the mime-writer Herodas, whose sixth *Mimiambus* seems to figure its own mischievous poetics in the dildo which is described in para-rhapsodic terms (51 *ῥάψαι*; 58, where its stitcher comes from the Homeric heartlands of Chios or Erythrae). So, where Homer could be read as supplying an image of pastoral within epic, the Hellenistic writers of mime respond with images suggestive but subversive of traditional high poetics within their unconventional new domains.

I conclude with *Homeric hymns*, which are perhaps special cases. Obviously members of the hexameter canon, Callimachus takes up the challenge to imitate them, and does so with sufficient recognisability that manuscripts transmit his six hymns together with the Homeric collection as well as the Orphic corpus and Proclus' seven compositions in Homeric metre and language. Callimachus, as we have seen, uses the *presque homérique* and even endows the fourth hymn with a number of epic similes, in remarkable contrast with the dearth of similes in the *Homeric hymns* themselves. We can include them in the present discussion provided that it is recognised that this is no guarantee that Callimachus or any other third-century poet would have allowed them to be genuinely Homeric works.<sup>48</sup>

It is quite clear that they are Callimachus' primary referent. He uses the Homeric collection to place his own: the vacillation about the correct birth-place of Zeus in his first hymn recollects a similar uncertainty in the first hymn of the Homeric collection for Zeus' son, Dionysus. But by now we are primed to expect contamination or hybridisation of genre and form. Callimachus' hymns retain rhapsodic characteristics, indeed precisely those formal elements that can serve as what Ian Rutherford has called "generic signatures":<sup>49</sup> introductory and closing elements, including the vocabulary of *ἀοιδή* and *ἀείδειν* (1.1; 3.1, 137, 268), the closing salutation *χαίρει* (1.94, 2.113, 3.268, 4.326, 5.140–41, 6.134) and

48 Depew (1998) 157 n.6, citing Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1935) lxxix–lxxx.

49 Rutherford (2001) 72, 113, 246.

prayer for divine favour (3.268),<sup>50</sup> and in some cases a narrative centrepiece. But Callimachus does not remain faithful to the conventions of rhapsodic hymn. The last two, of which the fifth is in elegiac couplets, have Doric dialectal coloration; as with Theocritus' *Idylls*, this is quite compatible with Homeric diction. Furthermore, they may be combined with other kinds of hymn, particularly those that suggest a particular setting or context, even if a hexameter background is lacking. For example, the first line of the first hymn suggests a libational performance at a symposium. The second seems to want to evoke the paian by the use of the refrain ἰὴ ἰὴ παῖῶν (21, 27, 103, cf. 25, 80), while repetitional devices and jingles throughout suggest indebtedness to choral hymns and a more popular tradition of song. The best-known feature of Callimachus' hymns (nos. 2, 5, 6) is his creation of a new, mimetic, form, which recreates the ongoing circumstances of its performance. It is true that the *Homerian Hymn to Apollo* contains a remarkable evocation of a Delian festival (147–64), but the fiction of live enactment looks more like a hyper-development of some of the conventions of the first-person enunciations of choral lyric.

Some hymns adhere more closely than others to a rhapsodic ground-plan. This is perhaps clearest in the two central hymns, to Artemis and to Delos, which are also the longest. But although the fifth and sixth hymns are both mimetic, in other words supposedly *viva voce* enactments of an ongoing public ceremony, the mimetic elements enclose a central panel of mythological narrative whose origin is in the rhapsodic tradition (5.57–136; 6.24–117). Both are carefully given rationales in their respective contexts; Callimachus works to “naturalise” both, despite their origin in an independent strand of hymnody, in a tradition (found or invented) of public choral song.<sup>51</sup> With Callimachus' hymns, it is, in short, rather as in Theocritus' *Idylls*. We cannot speak of the reproduction of an archaic genre. It is always a cross-fertilisation of different strains.

Among the corpus of *Homerian hymns*, Callimachus seems to have been particularly attracted by the second longest, the *Hymn to Apollo*. In that it depicts a god's birth and acquisition of powers and prerogatives, it is characteristic of ancient hymn: Callimachus replays the motif over and over again in his first four hymns, often very idiosyncratically, never more so than in his revision of

50 The prayers at the end of the fifth and sixth are more communal than the Homeric norm (though see HHom. 13.3); this is in keeping with the communal celebrations portrayed there. The prayer concluding the first Hymn echoes HHom. 15.9, 20.8.

51 It cannot even be said that there is a direct association between the choice of Doric colour and the evocation of cult hymn, since the second hymn, which evokes a paean in the Dorian cult of Carnean Apollo, is in fact in epic-Ionic.

Leto's wanderings and Apollo's birth in the *Hymn to Delos*.<sup>52</sup> In other respects it stands out from the rest, in its presentation of a communal festivity on Delos (again updated by Callimachus in *Hymn* 4.278–79<sup>53</sup>), and in the emergence of an overt narrator, self-conscious and proud of his poetic achievement. To what extent that lies in the background of the disconcertingly sudden appearance of poetological material in *Hymn* 2.105–12 is unclear, but it does seem that Callimachus was drawn to the hymnode's two reflections on the choice of his material (3.19–28, 207–15, both passages commencing πῶς τ' ἄρ σ' ὑμνήσω πάντως εὖσυχον ἔόντα;). In essence a formal and self-conscious device employed by a poet to fix on a theme, in Callimachus' hands the priamel is particularly pointed, as he reflects on his control over and shaping of his material.<sup>54</sup> The example in 4.28–9 stays close to the Homeric model in one sense, as it bridges the hymn's attributive and mythical material. At the same time, however, it introduces the myth with deliberate indirection, as the floating island of Asteria is the *exception* to the fixed islands the priamel opens with. And in *Hymn* 1.4 πῶς καὶ νιν, Δικταῖον ἀείσομεν ἢ ἐ Λυκαίων; | ἐν δοιῇ μάλα θυμός, the poet feigns genuine *aporia*: how is he to sing of Zeus? His answer – an equivocation between plural versions – may be, according to taste, an attempt to throw dust in the reader's eyes, or an acknowledgement of the crowded traditions and competing interests of the Hellenistic world. Either way, when a Hellenistic poet comes to reflect on the question “how shall I sing?”, he engages with a world that is more multivocal than ever before. And that can serve as a summation of this whole chapter.

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52 Bing (1988) 91–143, 146; Depew (1998); the commentary by Mineur (1984, 4–9), stresses its rhapsodic antecedents.

53 Bruneau (1970, 108–109 and 16–52) on the hymn's *actualité*.

54 On Callimachus' adaptation of the priamel, see Bundy (1972) 66–72.

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## Brevis Homerus: Homer in the Greek Epigram of the 1st to 4th Centuries

*Luis Arturo Guichard*

Homer, the greatest of all classical authors according to the very definition of Antiquity, and the epigram, the briefest of poetic genres, always maintained a paradoxical and intriguing relationship.<sup>1</sup> The epigram is in itself a paradoxical genre. On the one hand, it is a perfectly encoded genre throughout its extremely long trajectory, from the earliest days of Greek literature through to the Renaissance. On the other, it is an open genre, with a consummate ability to “absorb” the literature of any given moment: a genre that is both permeable and adaptable.<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of Homer’s reception, the epigram reflects these two realities: on the one hand, there is a reception that we could refer to as “intrageneric”, and on the other, there is the one that responds to the notion held about Homer at a certain time in other genres in ancient literature; a reception we might define as “intergeneric”. The epigrams of the former type are the ones encoded the most, the ones that best respond to the more classical definition of the epigram and to the more established subgenres: votive and funerary epigrams in classical times; erotic and symposiac ones in the Hellenistic age; scoptic in Imperial Rome, and epideictic, gnomic, and philosophical in Late Antiquity. The ones of intergeneric kind are influenced more by surrounding genres, sometimes to the detriment of traditional structures and styles, and move further away from the subgenres inherited.

At each moment in history, the intrageneric and intergeneric contents are expressed in different ways and in different proportions, and there are of course many nuances over and above such generalisations. The epigram

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- 1 The seminal work on Homer and the epigram is still the one by Skiadas (1965), who provides an extensive and very readable view. Of great importance is the collection of articles edited by Durbec, Pralon, and Trajber (2017). I would like to thank L. Floridi, P. Verzina, and G. Vezzosi for their comments and suggestions, and the Research Project FI2017-84036-P, “Estudio sobre el nuevo Posidipo: elaboración de una nueva edición crítica y primera traducción española con comentario” (Mineco-Spain) for its practical support.
  - 2 Several examples of this protean nature can be read now in Cairns (2016), an acute exploration of the genre.

from archaic times is the one most encoded and the most “intrageneric”, but in no way should it be considered a purely utilitarian and direct genre, as has sometimes occurred in the past. It is a very lively genre from a purely literary perspective, independently of its function as part of a monument. Greater encoding does not mean any lesser creativity.<sup>3</sup> Insofar as the Homeric substratum is concerned, the relationship between archaic metrical inscriptions and epic is sufficiently well known and has been extensively studied in recent years: the metrics, obviously, phraseology, dialect, and the poetic uses of epic are often found from the first inscriptional epigrams through to those of the classical era, sometimes with extremely interesting variations.<sup>4</sup> The truth is that the Homeric text is part of the epigrammatic texture from the very start, being one of its vital components. Although the most immediate forerunner of the inscriptional epigram is to be found in archaic elegiacs,<sup>5</sup> epic is the second reference point. This tendency is upheld in Classical times: it is a well-encoded genre, in which Homeric references play an important part.

For the epigram, as well as for other genres, Hellenism represents the most important shift in its history: the genre is refreshed and transformed in the hands of the first-generation Alexandrian poets, adopting content that had hitherto been the domain of lyrical poetry.<sup>6</sup> This is a fascinating process, in which the spheres of the strictly literary and inscriptional are often intertwined.<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of Homer’s reception, the Hellenistic epigram reveals the clear influence of Alexandrian philological practice, with a tendency to use difficult Homeric terms and glosses, at the same time as considerable adroitness to readapt the epic text to new erotic-symposiac themes.<sup>8</sup> The Hellenistic epigram shows great respect for the figure of Homer, and generally follows his narrative of Trojan history, although it delights in focusing on minor characters, giving them greater importance than they receive in the *Iliad* or in the *Odyssey*.<sup>9</sup>

3 Baumbach, Petrovic and Petrovic (2010) 3: “Early Greek epigrams have been widely neglected by classicists and, if studied at all, have rarely been analysed as literary texts, but rather for the historical information they convey.”

4 It suffices to refer to the very interesting books by Tsagalis (2008) and Garulli (2012), who cite all the preceding literature on Homer and the inscriptional epigram and analyse the texts by applying modern criteria.

5 See the comprehensive study by Aloni and Iannucci (2007).

6 See Acosta-Hughes and Barbantani (2007), with bibliography and discussion of the main texts.

7 Guichard (2004) 32–42; Bettenworth (2007); Sens (2011a) xxxiv–xli; Garulli (2012) 15–34.

8 For Alexandrian philology and the epigram, see Sistakou (2007); for the reuse of Homer in erotic epigrams, Gutzwiller (2017).

9 For the “idea” of Homer among Alexandrian epigrammists, see Bolmarcich (2002); for their treatment of epic themes, Harder (2007).

The focus of this paper will be on epigrams from the Imperial era and the early stages of Late Antiquity, that is, from the 1st to 4th centuries CE.<sup>10</sup> The most original feature of the epigram in Imperial times is undoubtedly the scopic genre. There are direct precedents in Posidippus and other Greek poets, who had already adapted the language of theatre to the epigram and had composed texts of ironic intent; yet the subgenre, with a specific set of topics and manners, is a contribution made by the Imperial era and an example of that intergeneric capacity referred to earlier. An immediate result, from the perspective of interest to us here, is the parody of literary models and the reuse of the classics imbued with ironic meaning. This can be seen in the very *Anfangsgedicht* by Lucillius for his second book of epigrams:<sup>11</sup>

AP 9.572 = 2 Floridi

„Μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεδεῖν,  
ἔγραφε ποιμαίνων, ὡς λόγος, Ἡσίοδος.  
„Μῆνιν αἰεῖδε, θεά,“ καὶ „Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα,  
εἶπεν Ὀμηρεῖω Καλλιόπῃ στόματι.  
κάμῃ δὲ δεῖ γράψαι τι προοίμιον. ἀλλὰ τί γράψω  
δεύτερον ἐκδιδόναι βιβλίον ἀρχόμενος;  
„Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διός, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθην,  
εἰ μή μοι Καίσαρ χαλκὸν ἔδωκε Νέρων.“

5

“Let us begin our song from the Heliconian Muses”; so Hesiod wrote, they say, while he kept his sheep. “Sing, O goddess, the wrath,” and “Tell me, Muse, the man,” said Calliope by the mouth of Homer. Now I have got to write a proem of some sort. But what shall I write now I am beginning to

10 I pass over the epigrams that bookend this Companion in temporal terms: the Hellenistic era and the period of Late Antiquity after the 4th century CE. The reasons for this are not only of a practical nature (length of the paper), but also involve the content: Homer's reception in the Hellenistic epigram has been addressed in several works in recent years, and Homer's reception in the authors of the *Cycle* edited by Agathias, on the other hand, requires a dedicated study given the importance that Nonnus acquires as intermediary of the epic. In both cases, these are different studies to this one.

11 The English translations cited in this paper are those made by Paton (1918) for the *Anthology* and those by Murray (1924) for Homer; they are presented for purely illustrative purposes. The Greek text of the epigrams corresponds to the following editions: Floridi (2014) for Lucillius; Floridi (2007) for Strato of Sardis; Page (1978) for Rufinus; for Palladas I have used the text of the edition I am currently working on in collaboration with Ginevra Vezzossi; for all the other epigrams quoted, the edition by Beckby (1961). For Homer, West (1998–2000) and van Thiel (1991).

publish this second book? “Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus, I should not have been saved unless Nero Caesar had given me money”.

There is very little that connects this epigram, a veritable statement of principles (or lack of them, depending which way you look), to its Hellenistic precedents.<sup>12</sup> As Floridi notes, the image of impoverished poet had already been used as a *leitmotiv* by Leonidas of Tarentum, and the reference to Hesiod as a paradigm of the relationship between poet and “good king” is also to be found in other authors from Imperial times, more or less in the same courtly context. Nevertheless, of interest is the allusion to Homer in the epigram. From a purely functional point of view, it would have sufficed to mention Hesiod in the first distich: Homer is superfluous. Could it be that the poet has been unable to shake off the long tradition of always beginning with Homer, the first and foremost poet? This might be the case, but the adornment in the epigrams tends to be minimal, and here we would have a whole distich of embellishment. I believe there is an allusion here to the very figure of Homer as a poor, wandering poet that sought protection, although there might also be a veiled message: it is the Muse herself who is speaking through the poet’s mouth. According to biographical tradition, Homer was a blind poet who wandered from one place to another composing and reciting his poems,<sup>13</sup> in other words, a poor man ... but Lucillius reminds us that such a fragile human condition corresponds to (and contrasts with) the talent of a man through whose mouth speaks none other than Calliope. Humanly needy, indeed, as is Lucillius himself, who has been fortunate enough to be protected by Nero ... but inspired by the Muse. There is also an interesting contrast between the distich dedicated to Hesiod and the one dedicated to Homer: Hesiod’s example is qualified (and mediated) by the expression ὡς λόγος (“they say”), whereas Homer’s is taxative.<sup>14</sup> Could ὡς λόγος be another embellishment? I doubt it, too: there is a gradation, which goes from the plural “let’s begin” and the qualification “they say” to the fully affirmative “now I have to”. The one with whom Lucillius “connects” is Homer,

12 See the comprehensive analysis of this epigram by Sens (2011b), whose opinions I share, although I understand that the humorous interpretation of Homer-Lucillius carries a greater weight in the epigram than he suggests.

13 The material on this tradition has been gathered and commented on by Graziosi (2002) 125–163.

14 Sens (2011b) 180: “ὡς λόγος, in other words, humorously distances the narrator’s voice from the claim that Hesiod was both a writer of poetry and, simultaneously, a shepherd.”

the poor yet divinely inspired poet. Homer is used by Lucillius, therefore, to assert the value of his epigrams in spite of their vital condition.<sup>15</sup>

Not inspired, quite the opposite in fact, are the grammatical pedants to which another epigram by Lucillius refers:

AP 11.140 (49 Floridi)

Τούτοις τοῖς παρὰ δειπνον ἁιοδομάχοις λογολέσχαις,  
τοῖς ἀπ' Ἀριστάρχου γραμματολκρινίφισιν,  
οἷς οὐ σκῶμμα λέγειν, οὐ πεῖν φίλον, ἀλλ' ἀνάκεινται  
νηπυτιεύομενοι Νέστορι καὶ Πριάμῳ,  
μή με βάλῃς κατὰ λέξιν „ἔλωρ καὶ κύρμα γενέσθαι“.  
σήμερον οὐ δειπνῶ „μήνιν ἄειδε, θεά.“ 5

To these praters, these verse-fighters of the supper table, these slippery dominies of Aristarchus' school who care not for making a joke or drinking but lie there playing infantile games with Nestor and Priam, cast me not literally "to be their prey and spoil." Today I don't sup on "Sing, O Goddess, the Wrath."

Under the guise of an attack upon dull and predictable grammarians, here we have an interesting claim: what Lucillius wants to say is that the Homeric text does not belong to these grammarians; they have no inherent right to them because they have learnt him or perhaps even taught him at school. The Homeric quotation is wholly functional: it is something that is launched like a missile, deployed as a weapon. Further still, the poet highlights the scant creativity of those grammarians: they know only how to speak κατὰ λέξιν, "literally," they know how to quote, but not to apply variety. The symposiac context is functional; it is true that epigrams are often used to remind us of the rules of dining etiquette that were already present in archaic elegies, which include avoiding arguments when under the influence of wine and no fighting between symposiasts. These grammarians do not follow them (they are ἁιοδομάχοι) and, worse still, they place their mucky hands on Homer. Yet there is something else to remember, and that is the image of Homeric tradition as a banquet; Aeschylus already makes it very clear: his tragedies were large cuts taken from

15 As P. Verzina points to me, the word προοίμιον used by Lucillius (v. 5) may be significant, as it may refer to the passage in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (vv. 165–76) where the characterization of Homer as a beggar poet appears for the first time; there the poet asks for the survival of his hymn (προοίμιον), meaning with this his own work, as perhaps also does Lucillius with the pregnant verb ἐσώθην, that entails the poet and his book.

Homer's mighty dinners.<sup>16</sup> These grammarians mentioned by Lucillius do not follow the rules of the Homeric banquet, so he will not eat that food. He will find his cuts at another Homeric banquet.

A third epigram extends and completes the series:

AP 11.132 (41 Floridi)

Μισῶ, δέσποτα Καίσαρ, ὅσοις νέος οὐδέποτε οὐδεὶς  
ἤρεσε, καὶν εἴπη, „μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά,  
ἀλλ' ἦν μὴ Πριάμου τις ἔχῃ χρόνον ἡμιφάλακρος  
ἢ καὶ κυρτὸς ἄγαν, οὐ δύνατ' ἄλφα γράφειν.  
εἰ δ' ὄντως οὕτως τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἔχον, ὦ ὕπατε Ζεῦ,  
εἰς τοὺς κηλήτας ἔρχεται ἡ σοφία.

5

I hate, Lord Caesar, those who are never pleased with any young writer, even if he says “Sing, O Goddess, the wrath,” but if a man is not as old as Priam, if he is not half bald and not so very much bent, they say he can't write a b c. But, Zeus most high, if this really be so, wisdom visits but the ruptured.

We now move on from unbearable grammarians to an unbearable audience, or at least to part of it, who would not recognise the talent of the young poets even if they should write like Homer. We once again encounter the topical use of the figure of the poet as the master who is respected unquestioningly, over whom no shadow of doubt is cast. Yet at the same time, there is a subtle positioning regarding the epigrammatic genre itself. Those young poets (such as Lucillius himself) would not be respected, even if they wrote in exactly the same way as Homer did (κατὰ λέξιν, “literally,” as stated in the preceding epigram). *Ergo*, he does not write like that, but instead in an original manner: he is not interested in writing like Homer, but in his own way, as the Homeric way, however classical it might be, harks young poets back, bending and rupturing them. The imitation to which Lucillius aspires is of another, more creative kind. Within a context such as this one, one must attribute some considerable significance to what may well be the most interesting poem by Lucillius regarding Homer:

16 Test. 112a *TGF* (Athen. 8. 347d): ὃς τὰς αὐτοῦ τραγωδίας τεμάχη εἶναι ἔλεγεν τῶν Ὁμήρου μεγάλων δειπνῶν, “[Aeschylus] declared that his tragedies were large cuts taken from Homer's mighty dinners.”

## AP 11.77 (9 Floridi)

Εἰκοσέτους σωθέντος Ὀδυσσέος εἰς τὰ πατρῶα  
 ἔγνω τὴν μορφήν Ἄργος ἰδὼν ὁ κύων·  
 ἀλλὰ σὺ πυκτεύσας, Στρατοφῶν, ἐπὶ τέσσαρας ὥρας  
 οὐ κυσὶν ἄγνωστος, τῇ δὲ πόλει γέγονας.  
 ἦν ἐθέλῃς τὸ πρόσωπον ἰδεῖν ἐς ἔσοπτρον ἑαυτοῦ,  
 „οὐκ εἰμὶ Στρατοφῶν,“ αὐτὸς ἐρεῖς ὁμόςας.

When Odysseus after twenty years came safe to his home, Argos the dog recognised his appearance when he saw him, but you, Stratophon, after boxing for four hours, have become not only unrecognisable to dogs but to the city. If you will trouble to look at your face in a glass, you will say on your oath, “I am not Stratophon”.

The Homeric passage to which the epigram refers is very well known: Odysseus’ recognition by his faithful hound in *Od.* 17.290–327, and more specifically the episode’s final two verses (326–7): Ἄργον δ’ αὖ κατὰ μοῖρ’ ἔλαβεν μέλανος θανάτοιο, / αὐτίκ’ ἰδόντ’ Ὀδυσῆα ἐεικοστῷ ἐνιαυτῷ (“But as for Argos, the fate of black death seized him straightway when he had seen Odysseus in the twentieth year.”)

As Floridi correctly observes, except for a participle, there is no direct reference to the Homeric text: it is Homer without Homerisms.<sup>17</sup> Seen in purely rhetorical terms, it is interesting to note that this kind of paraphrase is documented in the more practical side of rhetorical tradition, namely, classroom exercises or *progymnasmata*. As we know well from testimonies on papyri, tablets and *ostraca*, the paraphrasing of Homeric texts was a common exercise in education in the Imperial period.<sup>18</sup> It is also known that there are two basic ways of paraphrasing: “grammatical paraphrasing” and “rhetorical paraphrasing”. The former involves following the Homeric text on a more or less step-by-step basis, albeit replacing anything that the average reader might have difficulty in understanding in terms of both syntax and vocabulary. The latter is of an amplificatory nature and does not necessarily follow the development of the original text in the same order, but it instead introduces new rhetorical features.

17 Floridi (2014) *ad loc.*: “colpisce l’assenza di legami verbali con il luogo omerico: fatta eccezione per il participio aoristo di ὁράω, utilizzato al nominativo in Lucillio e all’accusativo in Omero [...] non c’è alcun elemento che richiami non solo lo specifico passo odissiaco, ma i poemi omerici più in generale.”

18 The material has recently been compiled and analysed by Fernández Delgado (2011).

Do these two initial verses of the epigram echo this type of Homeric paraphrasing that discards anything Homeric? This may be overly subtle on my part, and I am willing to accept censure from a possible reader, although in my opinion there is a disconcerting correspondence between the Homeric text that everyone knows by heart, involving a paradigmatic passage such as the one about Argos that, furthermore, has been lost in the paraphrase, and the disfigured face of the poor boxer: there is nothing left of it, says Lucillius, to the extent that no one now recognises him. Indeed, the same has happened here with Homer's text as often happens in most elementary cases of classroom paraphrasing: the content may remain but not the form. It should be noted how the typically Homeric expression *ἔεικοστῷ ἐνιαυτῷ*, recognisable even by the Ionicism, has been replaced by the more common *εἰκοσέτους*, in which the ending found in Homer is avoided. The bruised and battered Homer we encounter in the paraphrase is, like the defeated boxers in Lucillius, unrecognisable. Lucillius does not subscribe to this tradition, as he has already stated in the epigrams analysed above. He follows the model, but he does not adopt the form if it does serve the purposes of *his* genre.

In the surviving work of the other two major authors of the scoptic epigram, Nicarchus and Ammianus, Homer does not have a programmatic interest as he does in Lucillius, and this may explain why he is hardly mentioned; there is just one reference to Irus, the beggar who competes with Odysseus when he is in disguise on Ithaca (*Od.* 18.239 ff.), in an epigram by Ammianus, in an extremely common moralising context,<sup>19</sup> and a parody on a grand scale of the distribution of the world in book 15 of the *Iliad* by Nicarchus. This epigram is fairly representative of a Homeric parody with obscene intent:<sup>20</sup>

AP 11.328

Τὴν μίαν Ἑρμογένης ἀγῶ ποτε καὶ Διδύμαρχος  
 ἤγομεν εἰς κοινὴν Κύπριν Ἀριστοδίχην·  
 ἥς ἔλαχον μὲν ἐγὼ πολὴν ἄλλα ναιέμεν αὐτός·  
 εἰς γὰρ ἓν, οὐ πάντες πάντα, διειλόμεθα.  
 Ἑρμογένης δ' ἔλαχε στυγερὸν δόμον εὐρώεντα,  
 ὕστατον, εἰς ἀφανὴ χώρον ὑπερχόμενος,

5

19 AP 11.209: Κἂν μέχρις Ἑρακλέους στηλῶν ἔλθῃς παρορίζων, / γῆς μέρος ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν ἴσον  
 σε μένει· / κείσῃ δ' Ἴρῳ ὅμοιος ἔχων ὀβολοῦ πλέον οὐδὲν / εἰς τὴν οὐκέτι σὴν γῆν ἀναλυόμε-  
 νος. "Even if you removest your neighbour's boundaries till you reachest the Pillars of  
 Heracles, a portion of earth equal to that of all men awaits you, and you shalt lie like Irus,  
 with no more than an obol on you, dissolving into the earth that is no more yours." About  
 the epigram, cf. Schulte (2004).

20 I quote the text according to Magnelli (2005), who combines the readings of the text and  
 of the manuscript transmission, and to whose article I refer for the critical apparatus.



ἔνθ' ἀκταὶ νεκύων καὶ ἔρινοι ἡνεμόεντες  
 δινεῦνται πνοιῇ δυσκελάδων ἀνέμων.  
 Ζήνα δὲ θῆς Διδύμαρχον, ὃς οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβαίνειν,  
 τὸ πολὸν κατέχων ἐν χειρὶ πῦρ, ἔλαχεν. 10  
 γῇ δ' ἔμενε ξυνὴ πάντων· ψίαθον γάρ ἐν αὐτῇ  
 στρώσαντες, τὴν γραῦν ᾧδε διειλόμεθα.

One day, Hermogenes and I and Didymarchus took one and the same dame, Aristodice, to a love-bed which we all shared. I myself was allotted a hoary sea to stay in – for we divided the business into one part each, not all of us getting the whole thing. But Hermogenes got a dismal mouldy lodging – the last place on earth; he dipped into an obscure spot where lie the shores which the dead haunt and breeze-tossed figs rock and roll around in the blast of horrid raucous winds. But Didymarchus – imagine him to be Zeus who was fated to climb to heaven's roof holding glowing fire in his hand. However, earth remained common ground to us all. For we spread a rush-mat on it; and that's how we parcelled out the old girl.

Any ancient reader, once they had stopped laughing, might remember and perhaps quote the tale of Poseidon in *Iliad* 15.187–93:

τρεῖς γάρ τ' ἐκ Κρόνου εἰμὲν ἀδελφοὶ οὓς τέκετο Ῥέα  
 Ζεὺς καὶ ἐγώ, τρίτατος δ' Ἀΐδης ἐνέροισιν ἀνάστων.  
 τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·  
 ἦτοι ἐγὼν ἔλαχον πολιὴν ἄλα ναιέμεν αἰεὶ  
 παλλομένων, Ἀΐδης δ' ἔλαχε ζόφον ἡερόεντα,  
 Ζεὺς δ' ἔλαχ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλῃσιν.  
 γαῖα δ' ἔτι ξυνὴ πάντων καὶ μακρὸς Ὀλύμπος.

For three brethren are we, begotten of Cronus, and born of Rhea, Zeus, and myself, and the third is Hades, that is lord of the dead below. And in three-fold wise are all things divided, and unto each hath been apportioned his own domain. I verily, when the lots were shaken, won for my portion the grey sea to be my habitation for ever, and Hades won the murky darkness, while Zeus won the broad heaven amid the air and the clouds; but the earth and high Olympus remain yet common to us all.

Apart from the famous tale to which it refers, the epigram reveals, in formal terms, other Homeric concomitances, already noted in the commentaries,<sup>21</sup> in

21 Schulte (1999), Parsons (1999) and especially Magnelli (2005).

which there is also a subversion of the original passages, with a sexual interpretation of almost all the terms, most of which, what's more, in a heroic context.<sup>22</sup> The reuse of the epic for obscene purposes is not a new phenomenon, nor one that is exclusive to the scoptic epigram;<sup>23</sup> amphibology, the use of *nomina ficta*, classification by human types and other features of the subgenre in fact come from the realm of the theatre, so it is no surprise that the parody of the epic also had this as its model. What is new is the intensive and systematic use of this kind of parody, which is used not only to lend a certain flavour to some or other passage, but also for the construction of the overall text. They are, therefore, epigrams that without their Homeric support would lose all their charm, as this stems from the decontextualisation and de-automisation of the text in general. Over and above erudite quotations or verbal humour, they require the subtext as a narrative framework and take part, in a humorous way, in the philological discussion and interpretation of the text.<sup>24</sup> They are second-degree literature in its fullest sense.

That same characteristic is to be found in several epigrams by Rufinus and Strato,<sup>25</sup> who wrote erotic poetry, albeit heavily influenced (the latter above all) by the techniques of the scoptic epigram.<sup>26</sup> Strato treats Homer in almost exactly the same way as Lucillius did. Rufinus uses the epic framework of the judgement of Paris in two epigrams with strong sexual content, in which there is a clear contrast between the refined language used and the somewhat smutty content: the judgement of the goddesses by a Homeric (anti-)hero becomes the setting and referent for a description of an *al fresco* party, as Page notes.<sup>27</sup> The vulgarisation of the classical text and the canonisation of everyday life go hand-in-hand.

Something similar occurs with Strato's epigrams, which have more Homeric references than in Rufinus' case. A good example is the following epigram about an "exchange" that is not very heroic:

22 Nisbet (2003) 84: "Nikarkhos' bawdy playfulness is clear indication of his confidence with Homeric raw material."

23 See the compilation of passages in Buchheit (1962) 99–105.

24 As pointed out by Vergados (2010), who aptly relates the epigram to scholarly discussion like those that emerge from some epigrams by Lucillius.

25 Rufinus 11, 12 and 19 Page (AP 5. 35; AP 5. 36; AP 5. 48); Strato 4, 25, 45, 67, 81, 83, 84, 89, 93 and 94 Floridi (AP 12. 4; 12. 184; 12. 224; 12. 240; 11. 21; 12. 242; 12. 247; 12. 251; 12. 252).

26 Floridi (2007) 22 rightly describes him as "un poeta satirico, anche se di ispirazione pederotica."

27 See the analysis by Sistakou (2011).

AP 12.204 (45 Floridi)

„Χρύσεια χαλκείων“ νῦν εἶπατε· „δός, λάβε“ παίζει  
 Σωσιάδας ὁ καλὸς καὶ Διοκλῆς ὁ δασύς.  
 τίς κάλυκας συνέκρινε βάτῳ, τίς σῦκα μύκησιν;  
 ἄρνα γαλακτοπαγῇ τίς συνέκρινε βοῖ;  
 οἷα δίδως, ἀλόγιστε, καὶ ἔμπαλιν οἷα κομίζῃ;  
 οὕτω Τυδεΐδης Γλαῦκον ἐδωροδόκει.

5

Now you may say, “Golden gifts for brazen.” Sosiades the fair and Diocles the bushy are playing at “Give and take.” Who compares roses with brambles, or figs with toadstools? Who compares a lamb like curdled milk with an ox? What do you give, thoughtless boy, and what do you receive in return? Such gifts did Diomedes give to Glaucus.

Il. 6.226–36:

«ἔγχεα δ' ἀλλήλων ἀλεώμεθα καὶ δι' ὀμίλου·  
 πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἐμοὶ Τρῶες κλειτοὶ τ' ἐπίκουροι  
 κτείνειν, ὃν κε θεὸς γε πόρῃ καὶ ποσσὶ κίχῃω,  
 πολλοὶ δ' αὖ σοὶ Ἀχαιοὶ ἐναιρέμεν ὃν κε δύνῃαι.  
 τεύχεα δ' ἀλλήλοις ἐπαμείψομεν, ὄφρα καὶ οἶδε  
 γνῶσιν, ὅτι ξεῖνοι πατρῷοι εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι.»  
 ὥς ἄρα φωνήσαντε, καθ' ἵππων αἵξαντε  
 χεῖράς τ' ἀλλήλων λαβέτην καὶ πιστώσαντο.  
 ἔνθ' αὖτε Γλαῦκῳ Κρονίδης φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεὺς,  
 ὃς πρὸς Τυδεΐδην Διομήδεα τεύχε' ἄμειβεν  
 χρύσεια χαλκείων, ἑκατόμβοι' ἐννεαβοίων.

“So let us shun one another’s spears even amid the throng; full many there be for me to slay, both Trojans and famed allies, whomsoever a god shall grant me and my feet overtake; and many Achaeans again for thee to slay whomsoever thou canst. And let us make exchange of armour, each with the other, that these men too may know that we declare ourselves to be friends from our fathers’ days.” When they had thus spoken, the twain leapt down from their chariots and clasped each other’s hands and pledged their faith. And then from Glaucus did Zeus, son of Cronus, take away his wit, seeing he made exchange of armour with Diomedes, son of Tydeus, giving golden for bronze, the worth of a hundred oxen for the worth of nine.

The famous exchange of weapons between Glaucus and Diomedes, in which some were more valuable than others, is here converted into a satirical epigram against a sexual exchange that is asymmetrical and against the rules, as it does not involve two equal “beauties”, but instead one who is old and the other just a youth, who invert the roles of active and passive lovers: their “arms”, Strato slips in, are not the same, and there is obviously one who loses out. In the world of homoerotic pleasure, whose regulations and infractions Strato delights in portraying in his epigrams, that difference in “value” between gold and bronze matters: it is obvious who is providing the gold. In the Homeric text, what’s more, there was an explanation for Glaucus losing his mind, which is Zeus’s crafty intervention, but here, Strato insinuates that the only reason is the gold of mercenary love.

As we have seen in these examples, the Homeric text had been used in a highly productive manner by the epigrammatists of the Imperial period as a respectable referent and also as material for parody. That tradition continues through to Palladas in the 3rd to 4th centuries CE, who nonetheless has an even more tenuous and ironic approach to Homer.<sup>28</sup> His case is particularly interesting due to the extent of his surviving work, which makes him the best represented Greek epigrammatist after Gregory of Nazianzus. In the 168 epigrams attributed to Palladas in the *Anthology* there is a wide range of different types, ranging from gnomic and philosophical to scoptic. Homer plays a key role in many of these epigrams,<sup>29</sup> which is no surprise when one considers that their author claims to be a school teacher.<sup>30</sup> In his reading of Homer, we find the entire palette already seen in Lucillius, Nicarchus, Strato, and Rufinus, and even a number of original aspects. From a lexical and stylistic point of view, a large part of the poems attributed to Palladas stems directly from the scoptic epigram, regardless of whether or not the subject is strictly satirical, and in particular there are references to Lucillius. One might say that the Homer of these epigrams is influenced by the 1st century CE author. Let us now consider some examples.

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28 I have covered him in Guichard (2016), a work I refer to for a comprehensive treatment of the topic. In order not to repeat myself, all I do here is provide certain key data, comment on some epigrams not dealt with there and add a number of remarks.

29 AP 6. 61; 7. 686; 9. 165; 9. 166; 9. 167; 9. 168; 9. 169; 9. 173; 9. 174; 9. 395; 9. 484; 9. 486; 9. 528; 10. 47; 10. 50; 11. 284; 11. 378. Interesting lexical references and word play are also found in 9.134.6, 9.170, 9.377, 9.9.393, 9.441, 9.489, 10.55, 11.349.4, 11.351.

30 Palladas had also access to the text (or a selection of texts) from the *Cypria*, as pointed out by Vezzosi and Verzina (2017), so his idea of epic was certainly wider than just Homer.



Anon. AP 6.291

Βακχυλὶς, ἡ Βάκχου κυλίκων σποδός, ἔκ ποτε νούσω  
 κεκλιμένα Διοί τοῖον ἔλεξεν ἔπος·  
 „Ἦν ὁλοοῦ διὰ κύμα φύγω πυρός, εἰς ἑκατόν σοι  
 ἡλίους δροσεράν πίομαι ἐκ λιβάδων,  
 ἀβρόμιος καὶ ἄοινος.“ ἐπεὶ δ' ὑπάλυξεν ἀνίην, 5  
 αὐτῇμαρ τοῖον μῆχρος ἐπεφράσατο·  
 τρητὸν γὰρ θεμένα χερὶ κόσκινον εὖ διὰ πυκνῶν  
 σχοίνων ἡλίους πλείονας ἠύγάσατο.

Bacchylis, the sponge of the cups of Bacchus, once when she fell sick spoke as follows to Demeter. “If I escape from the wave of this pernicious fever, for the space of a hundred suns I will drink but fresh spring water and avoid Bacchus wine.” But when she was quit of her illness, on the very first day she devised this Dodge. She took a sieve, and looking through its close meshes, saw even more than a hundred suns.

Is it simply by chance that the unattested name Baucalos used by Palladas is phonetically similar to Bacchylis, as in the anonymous example, and that the epigram by Palladas places a lofty discourse in the mouth of a very minor character, as occurs in the one by Lucillius, or of a loudmouth as in the anonymous one? Perhaps not, and it may be that the very expression τοῖον ἔλεξεν ἔπος, which constitutes the signature on the three epigrams, indicates a certain lineage. As Floridi notes, τοῖον ἔπος + *verba dicendi* often appears from Apollonios of Rhodes onward to introduce indirect discourses, yet it is precisely Callimachus who combines it with ἔλεξεν in *Lav. Pall.* 96. We therefore have a possible lineage Callimachus – Lucillius – anonymous – Palladas, furthermore reinforced with other features of epic diction;<sup>34</sup> Palladas, indeed, takes the hemistich κατέβης δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω almost word for word from *Od.* 23.252, changing only the person of the verb (δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω appears nine times as a formula in Homer), and the oft quoted τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὀχθήσας προσέφη appears as such thirteen times in Homer.

The epic narrative framework is also used in a very similar way to Lucillius in certain epigrams, adding complexity. Let us see, for example, AP 11.284:

Ἐκ γῆς Λωτοφάγων μέγας ὄρχαμος ἦλθε Λυκάων  
 Χαλκίδος ἐκ γαίης ἀντιοχευόμενος.

34 On the Callimachean readings of Palladas, apart from the well-known epigram on selling his books (AP 9. 175), see now Vezzosi and Verzina (2017).

From the land of the Lotophagi came the great leader Lycaon, from the land of Chalcis a fellow who gets mounted behind.

In just two verses, this epigram sums up several features of the scoptic subgenre: antithesis, etymology, wordplay, misunderstanding (geographical) and sexual double entendre. Firstly, there is a misunderstanding with the name Lycaon. On hearing it (or reading it) a contemporary might think of two characters: the mythical King Lycaon who served up human flesh to Zeus at a banquet to see whether he truly was omniscient, or his presumed descendant, the Homeric warrior Lycaon, who is mentioned in passing in the *Iliad* (2.826; 4.89; 5.193) as father of the archer Pandarus, who did have a more important role. In either of the two cases, there is a problem when relating the name to the country of the Lotophagi, for at a first glance it would seem that Palladas is identifying Lycia with the mythical land of the lotus eaters in the *Odyssey*; an identification that would strike an ancient (or modern) reader of Homer as extremely strange, as since Antiquity (at least since Herodotus 4. 177–8) the famous country of the Lotophagi had been situated in modern Djerba, in North Africa. As is common knowledge, both Lycaon, Pandarus' father, and his infamous forbear were from Lycia, in Asia Minor. An initial reading also reveals a glaring error in the second verse: Chalcis is on Euboea, and has nothing to do with Antioch, which is in Syria. The mistake is explained when one consider the obscene play on words that concludes the epigram: ἀντιοχευόμενος is initially the participle of ἀντιοχεύμαι, which means "bear on the back", but here it has the obscene meaning of "mounted behind", in the context of homoerotic relationships. Given the popular and jocular etymology, people from Antioch were adjudged to be particularly fond of this practice, with the argument being that their very name so indicated.<sup>35</sup> Thus, on a second level, a more accurate translation of the epigram is provided by Aubreton (1972): "*De la terre des Lotophages nous est venu un chef puissant, un Lycaon, un citoyen de Chalcis qui se fait Ant ... iochien.*"

The one from Chalcis has become "Antiochian". Yet how can it be that he was from Chalcis, if it states above that he is from the country of the Lotophagi, in other words, African? Here there is another play on words between the name of the city, Χαλκίς, and χαλκός, which means "copper, bronze or coin." In other words, this character, who hailed from the country of the Lotophagi (African), after spending some time in Chalcis (with a penchant for coins, a thief), became Antiochian (passive homosexual). What about Lycaon? The name of the King of Lycia stemmed from λύκος ("wolf") in popular etymology due to the famous episode of cannibalism. From then on the name was related

35 This is how it is told by the Emperor Julian *Misopogon* 342c–d, 359d.





her house like senseless animals. But Odysseus, having his wits about him and avoiding the folly of youth, possessed a counter-charm to enchantment, his own nature, not Hermes, implanting reason in him.

The Homer we see here comes from different genres to the epigram. The rationalist reinterpretation of the myth of Circe has already been told in prose and, as I have noted elsewhere, it has two very direct sources in the case of this epigram, two treatises attributed to Heraclitus: the very well-known *Homeric Allegories*<sup>38</sup> and a compilation-type text preserved in the paradoxographical tradition.<sup>39</sup> The interpretation Palladas makes of the figure of Circe perfectly fits the underlying principle in the allegorical interpretation: Homer uses symbols to conceal teachings of a moral or historical nature; in other words, the Homeric text may be read on a second level by appropriately resolving the enigmas.<sup>40</sup> Palladas faithfully follows the methods of analysis to be found in allegorical treatises, whose rhetorical nature should not be underestimated: it is true that these are texts with a stoic influence, and their aim is ultimately a moralising one, yet they are also rhetorical treatises in their own right;<sup>41</sup> one should not forget that several of the advanced rhetorical exercises that were

38 *Quaest. Hom.* 72.1–72.3 Russel-Konstan: 'Ο δὲ Κίρκης κυκεῶν ἡδονῆς ἐστὶν ἀγγεῖον, ὃ πίνοντες οἱ ἀκόλαστοι διὰ τῆς ἐφημέρου πλησμονῆς συνὼν ἀθλιώτερον βίον ζῶσι. Διὰ τοῦτο οἱ μὲν 'Οδυσσεὺς ἐταῖροι, χορὸς ὄντες ἡλίθιος, ἡττηνται τῆς γαστριμαργίας, ἡ δ' 'Οδυσσεὺς φρόνησις ἐνίκησε τὴν παρὰ Κίρκῃ τρυφὴν. Ἀμέλει τὸ πρῶτον ἐκ τῆς νεῶς ἀνιόντι καὶ πλησίον ὄντι τοῖς προθύροις Ἑρμῆς ἐφίσταται, τουτέστιν ὁ ἔμφρων λόγος (*Circe's potion is the glass of pleasure; the libertines who drink from it, in return for the ephemeral pleasure of satiating themselves, lead more miserable lives than pigs do. As a result, Odysseus' shipmates, who were a bunch of fools, let themselves be defeated by gluttony, but the intelligence of the hero remains victorious among all that softness floating around Circe. Odysseus, just after getting off the boat, encounters the apparition of Hermes, that is to say, the discourse of reason.*)

39 Heracl. *Paradox.* 16 Festa: ταύτην ὁ μῦθος παρ(αδ)έδωκε ποτῷ μεταμορφοῦσαν ἀνθρώπους. ἦν δὲ ἐταῖρα, καὶ κατακληλοῦσα τοὺς ξένους τὸ πρῶτον ἀρεσκείᾳ παντοδαπῇ ἐπεσπάτο πρὸς εὐνοίαν, γενομένους δὲ ἐν προσπαθείᾳ κατεῖχε ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις ἀλογίστως φερομένους πρὸς τὰς ἡδονάς. ἡττησε δὲ καὶ ταύτην Ὀδυσσεύς (*The myth tradition says that Circe would metamorphose humans with a potion. She was a courtesan who would firstly fascinate strangers by means of all sorts of flattery, she would then attract their interest and, when they felt passion for her, she would keep them close to her thanks to their appetites, while they were taken to irrational pleasures. She, too, was defeated by Odysseus.*)

40 Kim (2010) 80: "Allegorists like Maximus of Tyre or Heraclitus imagine Homer (if they imagine him at all) as some sort of semi-divine, mystical proto-philosopher, which is at least consistent with the enigmatic and convoluted manner in which they suppose him to have hidden the truth in his poetry."

41 Of great interest from this perspective is the study by Chiron (2005), with a good analysis of the rhetorical methods and terms of the allegorists.

studied at the schools of rhetoric, such as the prosopopoeia, the *chreia*, and the thesis, were useful for composing allegories.

We have so far had a brief look at Homer's reception in pagan tradition. His corresponding reception in Christian epigrams would require an entire work of its own, as it is framed within the process of appropriating and reinterpreting pagan culture and literature over the course of several centuries, being therefore a clear case of intergeneric influence. Nevertheless, I cannot forgo this opportunity to mention at least some of its characteristics.

From a purely literary perspective and considered within the context of the genre's reception, the epigrams by Gregory of Nazianzus, the largest body of 4th century Christian epigrams, constitute a kind of sudden hiatus: there is no parody, nor subversion nor criticism of any kind. One might assume that Gregory simply followed the familiar Christian approach of Basil, Clement, and many others, according to which the classical models and texts have to be used for evangelical purposes.<sup>42</sup> Yet I understand that there is more to it than that, namely, the subgenre of the epigram to which Gregory subscribes: his epigrams are above all encomiastic and funerary, two strongly intrageneric and codified subgenres, with little exposure to their surrounding literature. Gregory, then, renounced the pagan world<sup>43</sup> but not its basic foundations, in which Homer played a major part. That grammatical memory of the more basic school survives and can be clearly seen in numerous epigrams. In most cases, this involves hemistiches, formulae, verse endings, and epic terms, which ultimately constitute a "double language", both pagan and Christian.<sup>44</sup>

42 A process that has been brilliantly encapsulated in two lines by Lamberton (1997): "Christians [...] were able to neutralize the theological authority of polytheist texts and absorb this invaluable cultural property into Christian education."

43 This renunciation can be seen in one of his more successful epigrams (AP 8.80): Ἐλλάς ἐμὴ νεότης τε φίλη καὶ ὅσα πεπάμην / καὶ δέμας, ὡς Χριστῷ εἶξατε προφρονέως. / εἰ δ' ἱερῇα φίλον με Θεῷ θέτο μητέρος εὐχὴ / καὶ πατρός παλάμη, τίς φθόνος; ἀλλὰ, μάκαρ, / σοῖς με, Χριστέ, χοροῖσι δέχου καὶ κύδος ὀπάσεις / υἱεὶ Γρηγορίου, σὺ λάτρε Γρηγορίῳ ("My Greece, my dear youth, my possessions, my body, how gladly ye yielded to Christ! If my mother's vow and my father's hand made me a priest acceptable to God, why grudge me this? Blessed Christ receives me in thy choirs and gives glory to thy servant Gregory son of Gregory.") The Greece he is referring to is the Athens of his studies and the pagan *Paideia* in general, which he leaves to take his vows in 361.

44 This is how it is told in the catalogue of gifts of AP 8.79: Πρῶτα μὲν εὐχαμένη με Θεὸς πόρε μητρὶ φαινή· / δεύτερον, ἐκ μητρὸς δῶρον ἔδεκτο φίλον· / τὸ τρίτον αὖ, θνήσκοντά μ' ἀγνὴ ἐσάωσε τράπεζα· / τέτρατον, ἀμφήκη μῦθον ἔδωκε Λόγος· / πέμπτον, παρθενίη με φίλοις προσπύξατ' ὀνειροῖς· / ἔκτον, Βασιλίῳ σύμπνοα ἦρα φέρον· / ἔβδομον, ἐκ βυθίων με Φερέρσβιος ἦρπασε κόλπων· / ὄγδοον αὖ, ὅσοις ἐξεκάθηρα χέρας· / εἵνατον, ὀπλοτέρῃ Τριάδι ἦγαγον, ὦ Ἄνα, Ῥώμη· / βέβλημαι δέκατον λάεσιν ἢ δὲ φίλοις ("Firstly God gave me to my glorious mother in answer to her prayers; secondly, He received me a welcome gift from her; thirdly, the

This double language imbued upon it by the divine *logos* (ἀμφήκη μῦθον ἔδωκε Λόγος) has its pagan side precisely in Homer and in a handful of authors from the school curriculum, particularly Euripides and Menander. Through his references to these authors, Gregory appeals to his readers' more grammatical memory, to the texts with which they ultimately learnt to read and write. As regards these epigrams,<sup>45</sup> the most interesting ones are those in which we encounter paraphrasing of the type already seen in Lucillius; in other words, Homer without Homerisms, and above all those in which Gregory gives a slight twist to the meaning, changing the pagan sense. Let us see an example.

AP 8.13

Ἔκ με πικρῆς ἐκάλεσσε Θεὸς μέγας ἀγριελαίης·  
 ποίμνης ἡγεμόνα θήκε τὸν οὐδ' οἶων  
 ἔσχατον, ἐκ πλευρῆς δὲ θεόφρονος ὄλβον ἔνειμεν.  
 γῆρας δ' ἐς λιπαρὸν ἰκόμεθ' ἀμφοτέροι·  
 ἱρὸς ἐμῶν τεκέων ἀγανώτατος· εἰ δὲ τελευτὴν  
 ἔτλην Γρηγόριος, οὐ μέγα· θνητὸς ἔην.

Great God called me from the bitter wild-olive, and made me, who was not even the last of the sheep, the shepherd of the flock. From my devout rib he gave me wealth of children, and both of us reached a prosperous old age. The mildest of my sons is a priest. If I Gregory suffered death, it is no marvel; I was a mortal.

This epigram's *persona loquens* is Gregory's father, who remembers his conversion with a well-known passage from St. Paul,<sup>46</sup> and the help of his wife with the even more familiar text from Genesis;<sup>47</sup> alongside her, he says, he

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holy table saved me from death; fourthly, the Word gave me two-edged speech; fifthly, Virginity enfolded me in her dear dreams; sixthly, I entered the priesthood in union with Basil; seventhly, my father saved me from the deep; eighthly, I cleansed well my hands by disease; ninthly, I brought the doctrine of the Trinity, O my Lord, to New Rome; tenthly, I was smitten by stones and by friends.”)

45 AP 8.13, 16, 26, 50, 78, 86, 116, 119, 130, 149, 152, 163, 192, 218 and 233.

46 *Romans* XI 17: εἰ δέ τινες τῶν κλάδων ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν ἐνεκεντρίσθης ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ῥίζης τῆς πιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου, μὴ κατακαυχῶ τῶν κλάδων· (“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them, and became partaker with them of the root and of the richness of the olive tree; don’t boast over the branches.”)

47 *Gen.* II 21–22: καὶ ἐπέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς ἔκστασιν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀδὰμ, καὶ ὕπνωσεν· καὶ ἔλαβεν μίαν τῶν πλευρῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεπλήρωσεν σάρκα ἀντ’ αὐτῆς, καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὴν πλευράν, ἣν ἔλαβεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ, εἰς γυναῖκα καὶ ἡγάγεν αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸν Ἀδὰμ. (“And God cast a trance

reached a prosperous age. While the previous verses contained a direct reference to the Biblical passages, here there is a Homeric formula whose meaning has been slightly altered. The Homeric formular expression γήρ᾽ ὑπο λιπαρῶ (Od. 11.136; 23.283), γῆράς τε λιπαρὸν (Od. 19.368) and such like always refer to material wealth and a life of riches. Gregory makes it clear that that life was prior to his conversion. Gregory's father had indeed belonged to the sect of the Hysistarians, according to Gregory himself (*Orat.* 18. 5), and had renounced all his worldly goods to convert, eventually becoming a bishop. That "Homeric" life, therefore, firmly rooted in the material world, pertains to paganism and precedes the call of the true faith, which brings with it a new root.

It is interesting to note that Gregory's epigrams continue to treat Homer as an untouchable figure of literary culture, as a model that can be, and indeed is, distorted, but a model nonetheless. Subtle criticisms are slipped in about the pagan world and life they come from, but the value of the text is not questioned either in the literary epigram or in the inscriptional epigram<sup>48</sup> until much later on, by then in the Byzantine era.<sup>49</sup> In pagan tradition, however, both the figure of Homer and the Homeric text are subject to greater creative mis-giving, thereby invigorating the epic tradition by means of a certain rupture. The appropriation that pagan poets such as Lucilius, Nicarchus, Strato and Palladas make of the Homeric "tribal encyclopaedia" reveals a direct dialogue with the tradition without fear of questioning it and giving it new meaning.

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upon Adam, and he slept, and he took one of his ribs and filled up flesh in its place. And the rib that he had taken from Adam the Lord God fashioned into a woman and brought her to Adam.")

48 The Homeric reception in late inscriptional epigrams is both abundant and interesting; see the excellent work by Agosti (2017).

49 See accordingly the works by Boudignon (2017) and van Opstall (2017).

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# Reworking a Homeric Model of Heroism. Transformations of the Figure of Odysseus in the Novel of Chariton

*Christos Fakas*

## 1 The Epic Tale of Odysseus as the Model for the Ancient Novel

The importance of epic poetry to the post-classical genre of the novel is widely acknowledged. If the close link between these two forms of literature has in the past been considered as evidence that the latter is a direct descendant of the former, today it is more correctly perceived as the product of a systematic intertextual dialogue between the ancient novel and the (generally exceptionally influential) Homeric epic.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of narrative structure and technique, however, it is primarily the *Odyssey* that has served as a model for the novel. It is especially in this epic that Homer makes use of such novelistic strategies as the avoidance of linear narration, in-set tales often told in the first person, narrative flashbacks and recapitulations, and continuous alternations between the parallel narrative threads of the action of the story's main characters.<sup>2</sup>

Greater still was the influence of the main storyline of the *Odyssey*, that is, the combination of travel and amorous adventures with the happy ending of homecoming and conjugal reunion.<sup>3</sup> Such an extended, fictitious narrative could easily be read in the imperial period as a forerunner of the novel and an early expression of the same faith in the ideal of marriage that was echoed in this new genre of prose narrative fiction.<sup>4</sup> The resulting preoccupation of the

1 See more recently on this matter Zanetto (2014) with additional bibliography. While less evident, the influence of the Hellenistic epic of Apollonius Rhodius on the novel is not insignificant. See in this regard Heisermann (1977) 11–29; Beye (1982) 71–74; Reardon (1991) 129; Ruiz-Montero (1996) 55–59. For the possible impact of Virgil's *Aeneid* on the novel see Cataudella (1927); Tilg (2010) 261–297.

2 Hägg (1983) 110–111; Graverini (2006) 37.

3 Cataudella (1958) XXI; Hägg (1983) 110; Holzberg (2001) 43–44.

4 See in this regard Hölscher (1988) 228–29; Swain (1996) 119; Lalanne (2006) 127–128, 225. Along similar lines is the emperor Julian's reading of the *Odyssey* (3.112d–114b); see on this matter Vatsend (1993) 275–280. In a more personal vein, the perception that this epic focuses on the fortunes of a married couple is echoed by Ovid's remark that the *Odyssey* was nothing but the



ancient novelists with the *Odyssey* extended to a significant number of motifs (e.g., divine wrath or guidance, storms at sea, shipwreck) and secondary figures (e.g., rivals, helpers),<sup>5</sup> but was always focused on the protagonist of this epic, i.e., Odysseus. This complex Homeric hero appears in person in the ancient novel only once, in a dream of the priest Calasiris in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* (5.22.1–3), but he is the basic *comparans* for numerous novelistic characters, as clearly shows Lucius' invocation of him in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (9.13.4–5). This intertextual correlation was influenced not only by the long-standing ancient debate over the character of Odysseus,<sup>6</sup> with which the novelists were familiar, but also by his equation with Homer as the inventor of mendacious stories and arch-fabulist (cf. ἀρχηγός δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος ... ὁ τοῦ Ὀμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς, Luc. 13.3).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the extent to which the heroes of ancient novels follow the paradigm of Odysseus or diverge from it not only permits a fuller understanding of their character<sup>8</sup> but also highlights each novelist's specific attitude towards the Homeric epic.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 Novelistic Adaptations of the Figure of Odysseus in Chariton

The intertextual strategy described above becomes evident in the novel of Chariton, who weaves a dense web of allusions to Odysseus into his narrative, first and foremost in connection with the figure of Chaereas. In the very first chapter of the work this hero recalls the protagonist of the *Odyssey*, insofar as his beloved Callirhoe is like Penelope besieged by suitors (μνηστήρες κατέρρπον εἰς Συρακούσας 1.1.2.) and his own first encounter with her echoes that of Odysseus with Nausicaa (στίλβων ὥσπερ ἄσπῆρ 1.1.5 ~ κάλλει καὶ χάρισι στίλβων *Od.* 6.237).<sup>10</sup> However, the determination and ingenuity demonstrated in both

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story of one woman wooed for love's sake by many suitors in her husband's absence (*Trist.* 2.1.375–76); for this erotic interpretation of Homer in connection with the novel's interest in the *Odyssey* see Swain (1999a) 4.

5 Reardon (1991) 15–16; Graverini (2006) 37–39.

6 For detailed treatments of antiquity's reflections on this topic see Stanford (1954); Montiglio (2011).

7 Important for this question are the remarks of Hölscher (1988) 233–234; see also Kim (2010) 151–155.

8 See De Temmerman (2015) 318–323, who argues that in general the literary and mythological examples in the novel perform this function; see also De Temmerman (2014) 238.

9 For some acute observations on this topic see Fusillo (1988) 20–24; Fusillo (1989) 26–33.

10 See Hirschberger (1991) 164–165, who notes that in both cases the woman who meets the hero soon afterwards expresses a desire regarding her future husband (σὺ μοι, δέσποινα ... δὸς ἄνδρα τοῦτον ὃν ἔδειξας 1.1.7 ~ αἶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιόσδε πόσις κεκλημένος εἶη *Od.* 6.244). But

cases by Odysseus have evidently nothing to do with Chaereas' total lack of initiative.<sup>11</sup> And although later on this hero expresses the desire to sail off as soon as possible, even on a raft, to find Callirhoe (ἔτοιμος ὦν διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα ζεύξας σχεδίαν εἰς τὸ πέλαιγος ἑαυτὸν ἀφεῖναι τοῖς ἀνέμοις φέρεσθαι 3.5.1), momentarily displaying more decisiveness than Odysseus did on the island of Calypso (*Od.* 5.173–5),<sup>12</sup> his inferiority to his Homeric prototype soon becomes once again apparent: His attempt to commit suicide, in response to a flash of indecision at the moment of departure, by jumping overboard into the waters of the port (3.5.6.), contrasts comically with Odysseus' rejection of any such idea on the open sea (*Od.* 10.49–54).<sup>13</sup> And while Odysseus, after his return to Ithaca in disguise, manages to control his emotions when circumstances require it, Chaereas fails spectacularly in his attempt to do the same when he learns of his wife's remarriage (3.6.5–8).<sup>14</sup> It is not by chance that Chariton's hero reacts in a much more melodramatic manner to the tribulations of his wanderings, which he describes in Odyssean terms (ξένος ἄνθρωπος καὶ πένης 5.10.7 ~ ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοί τε *Od.* 6.208 = 14.58),<sup>15</sup> even though he is sharing them with a most helpful friend, such as Odysseus never had (cf. τίς εἶ καὶ πόθεν 4.2.15 [asked to Chaereas' friend Polycharmus] ~ τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν *Od.* 7.238 *al.* [mostly asked to Odysseus]).<sup>16</sup>

In the last two books of the novel, however, Chaereas truly becomes a hero of Odyssean stature both in terms of rhetorical skill (7.3.4–5, 8–11; 8.2.10–4)<sup>17</sup>

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while in Homer the goddess Athena is responsible both for the encounter of Odysseus with Nausicaa and for the hero's splendid appearance (*Od.* 6.229–35), Chariton doesn't ascribe to Eros Chaereas' beauty but only his encounter with Callirhoe (1.1.4, 1.1.6). The comparison of the hero to a star, which the archaic epic normally used for warriors, is here transposed to an erotic context in imitation of Apollonius Rhodius (1.774–80, 3.956–61; for the first of these passages as a model for Chariton see Bowie [2006] 6), who in turn was possibly stimulated by the erotic rewriting of *Iliad's* battle scenes in the description of Odysseus's approach to Nausicaa. See in this regard Hunter (1989) 202–203; Hunter (1993) 48.

11 See Konstan (1994) 171, who remarks that this anti-heroic stance is related to the youthful immaturity of the (far less experienced than Odysseus) protagonist of Chariton's novel.

12 Hirschberger (1991) 171–172.

13 Jones (2012) 134 n. 142.

14 Montiglio (2013b) 151.

15 Gigante (2004) 189.

16 Gigante (2004) 186–187. As we shall see, the same question is put to Callirhoe (2.4.10) as part of Chariton's strategy to connect the novel's heroine, too, intertextually with the figure of Odysseus. For the subject of friendship in Chariton and his already Homeric literary background see now *in extenso* Φάκας (2017–2018).

17 Haynes (2003) 88; De Temmerman (2009) 253–257; De Temmerman (2014) 97–98, who observes that in the last of these passages Chaereas' oratory is intertextually contrasted with Agamemnon's failed address to the Achaean troops in the *Iliad* (2.53–154), thus

and in terms of war exploits, which through a quotation from Homer are compared to the slaying of the suitors in the *Odyssey* (τύπτε δ' ἐπιστροφάδην τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' αἰκίης 7.4.6 ~ τύπτον ἐπιστροφάδην τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' αἰκίης *Od.* 22.308; cf. 24.184).<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the eighth book, moreover, the Odyssean wanderings (ἀπὸ δύσεως εἰς ἀνατολὰς διὰ μυρίων παθῶν πλανηθεῖς 8.1.3) are also ascribed to the wrath of a divinity, in this case Aphrodite, which, however, is longer and farther present than that of Poseidon in the *Odyssey* (γυμνάσασα διὰ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης 8.1.3),<sup>19</sup> ending only after Chaereas has paid for his *hybris* (ἐπεὶ δὲ καλῶς ἀπελογήσατο τῷ Ἑρωτὶ Χαιρέας 8.1.3).<sup>20</sup> As in the *Odyssey*, so in Chariton the hero's *aristeia* is followed by his reunion with his wife,<sup>21</sup> which is described with the famous line from Homer where Aristarchus thought the poet's epic had its *telos* (ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιῶ θεσμόν ἴκοντο 8.1.17 = *Od.* 23.296).<sup>22</sup> But while Odysseus exchanges with his wife information about their adventures after their lovemaking (*Od.* 23.300–43), Chaereas does so before that (8.1.14–7),<sup>23</sup> stressing not his miseries (cf. κήδεα *Od.* 23.306) but his feats (ἐναβρυνόμενος τοῖς κατορθώμασιν 8.1.17), to which he is now going to add his return to the conjugal bed.

The episodes that in accordance with the narrative pattern of the *Odyssey* follow this climactic event<sup>24</sup> reinforce the impression that Chariton is now presenting his hero as striving for a *kleos* bigger than that of Odysseus. In order to make his own homecoming more spectacular, Chaereas resorts momentarily

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reminding the reader that the solution in the latter case was eventually brought about by the rhetorically impressive intervention of Odysseus (2.182–335).

- 18 For Odysseus as one of the Homeric models for Chaereas here see Müller (1976) 128; Smith (2007) 93; De Temmerman (2014) 73–94. Generally, for Chaereas' gradual transformation into an epic type of hero see Lalanne (2006) 156–159.
- 19 For divine wrath as the cause of the wanderings of both Chaereas and Odysseus see Hunter (1994) 1084; Reardon (1996) 333 with n. 48. Scourfield (2001) 167 n. 21 rightly observes that Poseidon's rage is important only to the first half of the plot of the *Odyssey*, since it ceases to affect the hero's adventures once he arrives in Ithaca. Weißenberger (1997) 63 compares Athena as the protector of Odysseus with Aphrodite in our novel, arguing also that Chariton presents this divinity as part of a *Götterapparat* divided into two opposing subgroups, as is the case *inter alia* in the *Odyssey*.
- 20 Homer's Poseidon on the other hand remains hostile to Odysseus but is compelled to yield to the will of Zeus; see Montiglio (2011) 126–127, who notes that Chariton's emphasis on Chaereas' final divine reward is inspired less by the *Odyssey* than by a moral interpretation of this epic current in the early centuries of the imperial period.
- 21 Montiglio (2013) 31–32.
- 22 Biraud (1985) 25; Goldhill (1995) 129–130; Gigante (2004) 194; Montiglio (2013a) 41.
- 23 Kuch (1989a) 78; Hirschberger (2001) 168; Smith (2005) 184–185.
- 24 For the continuation of the narrative after the couple's return to its marital bed both in Chariton and in the *Odyssey* see Montiglio (2013a) 41–42.

to what for Odysseus was only a means of survival, namely concealing his identity (8.6.4);<sup>25</sup> after revealing himself, he proudly displays the wealth which he, like the Homeric hero, brought home with him (8.6.12 ~ *Od.* 5.37–40),<sup>26</sup> but which Odysseus was initially obliged to hide (*Od.* 13.363–71). However, what primarily makes the triumph of the novelistic hero outshine that of his epic predecessor is Chaereas' first-person narration of his adventures to the people of Syracuse (8.7.9–8.11), which simultaneously recalls both relevant narratives of Odysseus: the report of his adventures to Penelope, which is recapitulated in indirect speech in the third person (*Od.* 23.310–41), and his earlier first-person account of himself on the island of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 9–12; cf. ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων ἤρξατο ... ἐρωτῶμεν, ἀνωθεν ἄρξαι 8.7.3 ~ τί πρῶτόν τοι ἔπειτα, τί δ' ὑστάτιον καταλέξω *Od.* 9.14).<sup>27</sup> Summarising in direct speech at the end of the novel the longest part of its plot, Chaereas is not simply associated with the author as primary narrator more emphatically than was the case with Odysseus;<sup>28</sup> above all he gives at the city's theatre a (typical for the imperial period) stirring solo performance, once again over-emphasising his personal achievements with a rhetoric virtually unknown to Odysseus.<sup>29</sup> Chariton's attempt to leave his hero surrounded by greater glory than Homer's at the end of the story even extends to an indirect comparison of each man's subsequent fate. The future arrival of Chaereas' son in Syracuse (8.4.6), announced by the hero enthusiastically in the

25 For the lie told here by Chaereas as an element connecting him with Odysseus see Montiglio (2013a) 43, who also observes that the status of merchant, which Chaereas here pretends to have, is wrongly ascribed to Odysseus too by some of his interlocutors (*Od.* 8.161–64, 24.300). We shall see that this guise is also assumed by another Odyssean *persona* in Chariton's story, namely the pirate Theron.

26 Hirschberger (2001) 172.

27 See Hägg (1971) 328–329, who notes that, while in the *Odyssey* the hero's adventures are first recounted by himself in the first person and later summarised in third-person narrative and indirect speech, in Chariton the initial third-person account is summarised at the end by Chaereas in direct speech. The same reversal of the Homeric pattern occurs in the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* 48. One more innovation of Chariton in relation to the Homeric original is that Chaereas' first-person summary follows and completes the second-person account given by Hermocrates (8.7.4–8). The Homeric formula ἐνθεν ἐλὼν, which introduces Chaereas' speech (8.7.9 = *Od.* 8.500, 14.74), associates the hero with another intradiegetic narrator in the *Odyssey*, namely Demodocus.

28 See Fusillo (1997) 216; Baumbach (2011) 268–269; Whitmarsh (2011) 64–66, who correctly compares the care Chaereas takes not to upset his audience in the telling of his tale (8.7.3) with the intentions of the primary narrator of the novel, as these are clearly expressed in the opening of the final book (8.1.4). For the function of this embedded first-person narrative see also Morgan (2004) 487.

29 See especially the penetrating observations of Whitmarsh (2011) 64–65. This intertextual *aemulatio* certainly results from the interest of the imperial age in Odysseus as an orator; see in this regard Anderson (1993) 75–77.

assembly (8.7.12), brings to mind the prospective visit to Odysseus of his son by Circe, Telegonus; in this way the happy ending of the novel appears in sharp contrast to the dark prospect of patricide connected with Telegonus, which was arguably prophesied to Odysseus by Teiresias (*Od.* 11.134–6  $\cong$  23.281–3).<sup>30</sup> The final triumph of the novelistic hero would have been for his epic model within the context of the epic cycle simply an illusion.

Chariton's systematic comparison of Chaereas to Odysseus is rendered even more evident by the novelist's simultaneous comparison of the wives of the two heroes, i.e., Callirhoe and Penelope. This practice culminates (as we have seen) in the quotation from the *Odyssey* that Chariton uses in his account of Chaereas' reunion with Callirhoe (8.1.17 ~ *Od.* 23.296) but is at work from the beginning of the narrative. Thus, Callirhoe's nurse who tells her that she is to marry (1.1.14) recalls Penelope's nurse who told her of Odysseus' return (*Od.* 23.1–9),<sup>31</sup> while a further allusion to Odysseus' wife is here detectable in Chariton's use of the Homeric formula τῆς δ' αὐτοῦ λῦτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ (1.1.14 = *Od.* 4.703).<sup>32</sup> Besides, it cannot escape notice that each of both heroines mourns her faraway husband until she falls asleep at the end of a book (1.14.10 ~ *Od.* 19.603–04;<sup>33</sup> cf. also on the level of expression: τοιαῦτα ὀδυρομένη μόλις ὕπνος ἐπήλθεν [αὐτῇ] 1.14.10 ~ τόσσα μιν ὀρμαίνουσιν ἐπήλυθε νήδυμος ὕπνος *Od.* 4.793, again in reference to Penelope).<sup>34</sup> An additional connection with Odysseus' wife is established by the reference to Callirhoe's suitors in Syracuse (1.1.2; cf. πάντες οὖν ἐπήνεσαν 1.2.4 ~ οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνεον *Od.* 4.673, in both cases relating to the suitors' intrigues)<sup>35</sup> and to her admirers in Babylon, of whom Chariton uses a Homeric line referring to Penelope's suitors (πάντες δ' ἠρήσαντο παρὰι λεχέεσσι κλιθῆναι 5.5.9 = *Od.* 1.366, 18.213).<sup>36</sup> Chariton also borrows from the *Odyssey* lines relating to Penelope in speaking of Callirhoe's beauty (Ἀρτέμιδι ἰκέλη ἢ χρυσείῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ 4.7.5 ~ Ἀρτέμιδι ἰκέλη ἢ χρυσείῃ

30 For this intertextual comparison with Odysseus see Montiglio (2013a) 46–47 and Elmer (2015) 602–603, who, however, consider also the possibility that the allusion to the *Telegony* undermines the optimism of Chaereas' words. For the problems and interpretations of Teiresias' prophecy in the *Odyssey* see Stanford (1959) 11. 387; Heubeck (1989) 86.

31 See Graverini (2014) 294 with apt observations on Chariton's play here with the expectations of readers familiar with the *Odyssey*.

32 Müller (1976) 129 with n. 73.

33 Gigante (2004) 181–182.

34 Montiglio (2015) 196.

35 Hirschberger (2001) 171. For the Odyssean theme of the suitors see Ζαμάρου (2017) 248.

36 For the comparison attempted here between Penelope in the *Odyssey* and Helen in the *Iliad* as models for Chariton's heroine see Biraud (1985) 27; Hirschberger (2001) 167; Fusillo (2006) 288; De Temmerman (2014) 53–54; Zanetto (2014) 401.

Ἀφροδίτῃ *Od.* 17.37 = 19.54)<sup>37</sup> and of her conduct as a wife (καίνου βούλεται οἶκον ὀφέλλειν ὅς κεν ὀπυίῃ 4.4.5 = *Od.* 15.21).<sup>38</sup> In this last case, indeed, the novelistic heroine displays much greater inventiveness and flexibility than her epic counterpart, raising far more questions about her behaviour towards her second husband than were attached to Penelope's attitude towards her suitors in antiquity.<sup>39</sup> As with Chaereas, so too with Callirhoe Chariton creates also particularly complex characters who not only recall their Homeric models but modernise them as well.

The figure of Callirhoe is further distinguished by the fact that in her case the paradigm of Penelope is inseparable from that of Odysseus,<sup>40</sup> whose lies pale in comparison to the one which our heroine tells her second husband concerning the identity of her child's father.<sup>41</sup> Characteristically, Chariton uses in the narrative on his heroine's first meeting with Dionysius a Homeric quotation, drawn from the scene of the first meeting between the disguised Odysseus and the suitors (καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν | ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶσι 2.3.7 ~ καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν | ... | ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες *Od.* 17.485, 487;<sup>42</sup> cf. also τίς ἡ γυνὴ καὶ πόθεν 2.4.10 ~ τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; *Od.* 7.238 *al.*, as a question repeatedly addressed to Odysseus).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, before long Callirhoe herself pleads with her

37 Hirschberger (2001) 167; Hägg (2002) 60, who notes that while in the *Odyssey* this comparison is made by the poet, in Chariton it is ascribed to Rumour. However, as Tilg (2010) 240–241, 254 notes, in this novel Rumour seems to be an allegory of the author's voice.

38 Biraud (1985) 27; De Temmerman (2014) 55.

39 For a comparison of the tactics of the two heroines see Hirschberger (2001) 167–168. For the question marks over their *sophrosyne* see the convincing observations of De Temmerman (2014) 55–57. For Penelope's dubious reputation in antiquity see generally Wüst (1937) 479–481.

40 This correlation of Callirhoe with Odysseus would probably have been established already by the title of the work, especially if it did not include the names of both main characters, but only that of the heroine; for the various opinions on this subject see Ζαμάρου (2017) 229–230. The importance of the novelistic titles in general as signs of differentiation from the *Odyssey* and the Homeric type of hero is rightly seen by Graverini (2014) 288.

41 Montiglio (2013b) 151.

42 See Montiglio (2013a) 34–35, who also notes that in this particular scene Callirhoe's denial of any divine nature recalls Odysseus' similar declaration in the episode of his recognition by Telemachus (2.3.7 ~ *Od.* 16.187). The Homeric quotation mentioned above is used, however, in Chariton as an expression of erotic admiration, without any connection to the religious theme of theoxeny, which is central in the corresponding Homeric passage; see on this subject Kearns (1982).

43 It is worth noting that Callirhoe's identity remains concealed for a day and a night, recalling Odysseus' delay in revealing himself at the palace of Alcinous; for this parallel see Montiglio (2013a) 35.

interlocutor to send her home, using as an argument that the Homeric Alcinous did the same with Odysseus (τὸν Ἀλκίνοον ἀγάμεθα δὴ καὶ πάντες φιλοῦμεν ὅτι εἰς τὴν πατρίδα ἀνέπεμψε τὸν ἰκέτην· ἰκετεύω σέ κάγώ 2.5.11; cf. ἰκέτης τε τέτυκται *Od.* 8.546 with regard to Odysseus).<sup>44</sup> And while in a later monologue she differentiates herself emphatically from the epic hero, declaring her marital fidelity more important than country and parents (τοῦτό μοι καὶ γονέων ἥδιον καὶ πατρίδος καὶ τέκνου, πείραν ἀνδρὸς ἑτέρου μὴ λαβεῖν 2.11.1 ~ ὥς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἥς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκῆων | γίγνεται *Od.* 9.34–5),<sup>45</sup> she will afterwards prove to be the equal of her Homeric counterpart, adapting adroitly to the circumstances in order to survive.<sup>46</sup> Like Odysseus, Callirhoe often deals with critical situations in a skilful as well as emotional way (συγκαλυψαμένη δακρύων ἀφήκε πηγὰς 1.3.6, ἐγκαλυψαμένη καὶ δακρύσσα 1.11.2; cf. *Od.* 8.83–6, 521–31, 17.304),<sup>47</sup> thus to some extent outshining Chaereas, who for a long time cannot cope with his sentimentalism (cf. Χαιρέας μὲν γὰρ ἐν κοίλῃ νηϊ συγκεκαλυμμένος ἔκλαεν 3.3.14). It is perhaps no accident that this complex Odyssean *persona* of Callirhoe ceases to be effective just before Chaereas suddenly assumes the role of Odysseus with new energy, as we have seen (6.5.8–10, 6.7.8–13).<sup>48</sup> In conclusion, Chariton uses the figure of Odysseus as a paradigm on the basis of which he compares the heroism of his two main characters, thus deepening his dialogue with Homer's epic and inaugurating a trend that was going to persist in the subsequent history of the novelistic genre.

Intertextual links with the figure of Odysseus may also be traced in the case of some of Chariton's secondary characters. These, however, prove to be less satisfactory imitations of the Homeric hero than the novel's two main figures, and thus tend rather to draw attention to what distances the novelist's narrative from its epic model. One characteristic example is Callirhoe's second husband Dionysius, whose unsuccessful attempt to suppress his emotions during a banquet recalls the equally vain efforts of Odysseus to do the same in the palace of Alcinous (2.4.1–2 ~ *Od.* 8.521–34). While the protagonist of the *Odyssey* is moved by the recollection of his feats at Troy, however, Chariton's

44 Hölscher (1988) 227; Gigante (2004) 182–183; Baumbach (2011) 263.

45 Gigante (2004) 184; Montiglio (2005) 233; De Temmerman (2014) 63–64.

46 It is characteristic that it is not Chaereas who, in imitation of Odysseus, has more than one marriage, but Callirhoe, as we are reminded by the stories of these characters, told by them in the night of their reunion. See Goldhill (1995) 129–130; Smith (2005) 24–25.

47 For this behaviour as characteristic of Callirhoe see Ζαμάρου (2017) 276.

48 For Odysseus as the model for Callirhoe in the first part of this episode see Whitmarsh (2005) 125; for the heroine's failure to preserve her Odyssean self-control in the second part as well see Montiglio (2013a) 151–152.

hero is tormented by his love for Callirhoe.<sup>49</sup> It is no coincidence that, like the heroine of the novel earlier, Dionysius rejects Odysseus' scale of values, putting love first (ἐμοὶ μὲν ἥρκει Καλλιρόη, καὶ πατρίδος μοι καὶ γονέων γλυκυτέρα 3.8.4 ~ ὥς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἥς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκῆων | γίγνεται *Od.* 9.34–5).<sup>50</sup> His words highlight the love theme as the crucial element that differentiates the novel from the epic and leads to a new sort of heroism with no relation to the Homeric *klea andron*. Thus, the enamoured Dionysius will describe himself in a lonely lament as τλήμων (6.2.5), an adjective that Homer used exclusively for Odysseus in the military context of the *Doloneia* (*Il.* 10.231, 498).<sup>51</sup> Although Dionysius will in the end also distinguish himself on the field of battle, on this level centre stage is held (as we have seen) by Chaereas who performs an *aristeia* comparable to the slaying of the suitors in Ithaca, and so like Odysseus will finally deprive his rival of the object of his passion (cf. τοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ 4.5.9 [with regard to Dionysius] ~ τῶν δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ *Od.* 22.68 [with regard to Penelope's suitors]).<sup>52</sup> Dionysius may with his nobility and culture win the sympathy of the reader, but as an imperfect imitation of the Homeric Odysseus he inevitably finds himself on the losing side.<sup>53</sup>

Even less surprising is the ill fate that overtakes another partial Odysseus figure in Chariton's novel, namely the pirate Theron.<sup>54</sup> This character is linked

49 For Chariton's dialogue with the *Odyssey* in this case see Whitmarsh (2005) 122–123 with n. 59, who also sees here an allusion to Telemachus' equally unsuccessful attempt to suppress his tears (*Od.* 4.114–16).

50 Gigante (2004) 184. For the increasing importance of the love theme in the novel evident in such passages, compared to its subordinate position in the *Odyssey*, see Lowe (2000) 224–225.

51 For this intertextual link see Jones (2012) 118 n. 88, who correctly notes the emphasis that Chariton lays on Dionysius' inner qualities rather than his physical prowess.

52 Müller (1976) 129–30 n. 73, 130 n. 77. Characteristically, Dionysius is also associated with the suitors as rivals of Odysseus by his use of the following Homeric quotation: καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν | ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶσι (2.3.7) ~ καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσι | ... | ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες (*Od.* 17.485, 489). According to Baumbach (2011) 264–268, the fact that for all his education Dionysius does not realise that this quotation distorts the current situation (as indeed was the case in the Homeric scene from which it comes) serves to undermine the authority of the speaker.

53 In contrast to the ultimately triumphant Chaereas, Dionysius appears towards the end of the work (8.5.12–3) to revert to his earlier despondent passivity, which clearly differentiates him from the much more self-controlled and enterprising Odysseus; see in this regard Montiglio (2013b) 152–154. On the whole, Dionysius' failure to reach his goal like Odysseus is well exploited by the remark of Reardon (1982) 13 that this character is “too *civilized* to set the world, or this story, on fire”.

54 For an exhaustive treatment of this character in Chariton's novel see Kasprzyk (2001).



to the hero of the *Odyssey* not only by his wanderings (ξένος εἶναι μοι δοκεῖς ἢ μακρόθεν ἦκειν 1.12.6 ~ νήπιος εἰς, ὦ ξεῖν', ἣ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας *Od.* 9.273, 13.237),<sup>55</sup> but also by his habit of recounting mendacious stories (1.12.8, 3.3.17–8, 3.4.8–9; cf. ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα *Od.* 19.203),<sup>56</sup> in which he, like Odysseus, repeatedly claims to come from Crete (3.3.17, 3.4.8 ~ *Od.* 13.256, 14.199, 19.172).<sup>57</sup> This intertextual link is reinforced by his supposed abandonment on the island of Cephallonia, a place of importance to Odysseus (3.3.17; cf. *Il.* 2.631, 4.330, *Od.* 20.210),<sup>58</sup> and by his false claim to be a merchant, an occupation wrongly ascribed to the Homeric hero too by some of his interlocutors (1.12.8 ~ *Od.* 8.161–64, 24.300).<sup>59</sup> Quite apart from his lies, Theron in general leads an adventurer's profit-oriented life that vividly recalls the world of Odysseus' fictional tales and their hero.<sup>60</sup> While the resourceful Odysseus may occasionally adopt such a fictitious *persona* (cf. ἀπατάων | μύθων τε κλοπίων *Od.* 13.294–95, referring to his first false tale), in reality his heroism is genuine and so wholly unthinkable for Chariton's cunning anti-hero (cf. ποικίλαις ἐπινοίαις πειρώμενος ἀπατᾶν 1.11.1; πανούργος ἄνθρωπος 1.7.1, 3.3.17).<sup>61</sup> As a distorted version of Odysseus this picaresque figure inevitably proves to be a foreign body in the more authentically Odyssean ideal novel, with the result that his lies, unlike those of Odysseus, are recognised as such (ψεύδεται 3.4.11; παγκρατῆς ἢ ἀλήθεια 3.4.13) and a sentence of death puts an end to his adventurous life (3.4.18).<sup>62</sup> The same qualities that for a time allowed him to carry the action of

55 Hirschberger (2001) 181. As in the second of the above Homeric passages, so in Chariton the respondent will before long tell one of his typical fictitious tales (1.12.8 ~ *Od.* 13.256–86).

56 For a comprehensive study of the false tales told of Odysseus see Grossardt (1998). For a useful synopsis of the main features of these narratives see Rutherford (1992) 69–73; see also Bowie (2013) 139, 193–194 with the more recent bibliography on the subject.

57 Hirschberger (2001) 181; Graverini (2015) 98–99. In Theron's real life Crete was nothing more than an island for which he set sail in vain after Miletus (3.3.9); from the map of Odysseus' wanderings, on the other side, Crete was totally absent.

58 See in this regard Russo (1992) 400–401. The fact that this specific island could not reasonably be a port of call on Theron's journey from Crete to Ionia further underlines the purely intertextual function of its mention here, as Graverini (2015) 98–99 correctly points out.

59 Theron's claim is in accord with the remark of the primary narrator that this character in his desire for profit treats Callirhoe as a merchant rather than as a pirate (1.12.1). Other elements that Theron shares with Odysseus as the protagonist of fictitious adventures are the existence of a brother who is soldier in Asia Minor (3.3.17 ~ *Od.* 19.181–84) and an adventure at sea in which all the rest of the crew perish (3.3.18, 3.4.9 ~ *Od.* 14.301–15), to which Chariton adds the (less lofty) trial of becalming; see Kasprzyk (2001) 159–160 with n. 80.

60 Whitmarsh (2011) 217; Montiglio (2013b) 154–155.

61 From this point of view Theron's dishonourable attitude towards his comrades is typical of his character and stands in stark contrast to that of Odysseus; see Kasprzyk (2001) 160.

62 For the crucial differences between the character of Theron and that of the complex figure of Odysseus see Hirschberger (2001) 181; Montiglio (2013b) 155. For useful observations on

the novel forward will, consequently, deprive him of the possibility of sharing in its happy ending.<sup>63</sup>

### 3 The Paradigm of Odysseus and Chariton's "Epic"

In conclusion, Chariton repeatedly correlates various characters of his novel indirectly with the protagonist of the *Odyssey*, thus spurring the reader to compare their qualities and actions with those of the Homeric hero.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that this lofty and multifaceted model survives only in a much diminished form in figures like the cunning and picaresque Theron, who recalls Odysseus as the hero of real or fictitious adventures and wanderings, or Dionysius, who in his emotional impasse reminds the reader of the unfortunate Homeric hero on the islands of Circe and the Phaeacians.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, the intertextual connection of these characters with the epic hero highlights similarities and differences between the novelistic narrative and the *Odyssey*, which is treated as both a masterpiece worthy of imitation and as the starting-point for a new literary enterprise.<sup>66</sup>

This strategy is even more evident in the case of the two central figures in Chariton's story, whose correlation with Odysseus is in the final analysis discernible from beginning to end of the narrative. The new literary genre of the novel thus dons the mantle of prestige of epic poetry, using the lustre of this lofty medium as a means of legitimating itself.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the fact that in the final phase of the adventures of Chaereas and Callirhoe the echoes of the *Odyssey* grow stronger, while those of the *Iliad* tend to fade,<sup>68</sup> seems to indicate

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Theron as a one-dimensional imitation of the adventurer Odysseus of the fictitious tales see Graverini (2015) 98–99. For Odysseus' false tales as forerunners of the picaresque and not the ideal novel see Hölscher (1988) 230.

63 For the significance of the figure of Theron as a narrative device see Kasprzyk (2001) 162; Tilg (2010) 162–163; Whitmarsh (2011) 217.

64 Similar is the conclusion of Cueva (2004) 92–93.

65 For the transitional nature of these episodes of the *Odyssey* in the context of the evolution in Odysseus's character that takes place in this poem see Rutherford (1986) 153–156.

66 For this dual aim of Chariton's engagement with Homer see Hunter (1994) 1083–1084.

67 For this specific aspect of the intertextual dialogue with Homer see especially Fusillo (2006) 284–289. The most obvious indication of this strategy are of course the numerous quotations from Homer in Chariton's text. See particularly Müller (1976); Manuwald (2000) 107–115; Baumbach (2011).

68 According to Zanetto (2014) 401: "... the Iliadic story of the novel will have an Odyssean solution". It is also characteristic of Chariton's preferences that his intertextual dialogue with the *Iliad* suggests a greater sense of distance from that epic than from the *Odyssey*;

that Chariton's *divine poet* (ὁ θεῖος ποιητής 5.5.9) provides the ultimate inspiration for the novelistic genre in his epic tale of Odysseus. Following in the footsteps of the author considered to be the father of Greek literature, Chariton will invent a middle-class prose epic,<sup>69</sup> with the (already more pronounced in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*) love element at its heart and with a pair of lovers as co-protagonists.<sup>70</sup> It is therefore reasonable that Chaereas and Callirhoe appear to engage jointly with the hero of the *Odyssey* and complement one another in terms of relationship with his example. Callirhoe, indeed, correlates in the intertextual kaleidoscope not only with Odysseus but also with Penelope (as well as, among others, with the *femme fatale* of the *Iliad*, i.e., Helen), and thus with her often contradictory aspects<sup>71</sup> proves to be the key figure in the unfolding of the action, largely overshadowing Chaereas.

Equally revealing and unexpected, however, is the way in which Chariton's hero faces the challenge of a model like Odysseus. In much of the novel the only Odyssean characteristic he displays is the feeling of helplessness (*amechania*) because of his troubles;<sup>72</sup> otherwise, he is limited to a passive role very different from that of Odysseus<sup>73</sup> and the Iliadic heroes whose sufferings in war stand in contrast to his erotic ones<sup>74</sup> (cf. the comparison initially used for his love-wound: καὶ ὥσπερ τις ἀρίστου ἐν πολέμῳ τρωθεὶς καιρίαν καὶ καταπεσεῖν

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for a penetrative analysis of the markedly different tone of the Iliadic allusions in this novel see Lentakis (2009).

69 Müller (1976) 131; Tilg (2010) 144; Zanetto (2014) 402. Although the precise date of Chariton's novel remains controversial, the prevailing opinion is that it represents the oldest surviving example of this genre; for a summary of the discussion on the subject see Ζαμπάρου (2017) 333–336. For Chariton as the first inventor of the ancient novel see more recently and persuasively Tilg (2010).

70 See the general observations of Morgan (1998) 219–220 on Chariton's intertextual references to Homer as a sign both of the novel's connection with the epic genre and of its differentiation from it.

71 For the complexity of Callirhoe as a result of her intertextual correlations see Hirschberger (2001) 164–169; Fakas (2005); De Temmerman (2014) 50–57, 115.

72 For the literary prehistory of this type of behaviour in epic heroes like Odysseus, or Apollonius Rhodius' Jason, see Hunter (1993) 10; Jones (2012) 92.

73 For the difference between Odysseus and Chaereas see McAlister (1996) 25, who however overlooks the latter's abandonment of his passivity towards the end of the novel; more accurate from this point of view is the assessment of this hero's character given by Jones (2012) 92–93.

74 Of all the heroes of the *Iliad* it is Achilles who is most frequently compared with Chaereas indirectly and in one case indeed expressly mentioned as equalling Chariton's hero in beauty (1.1.3). For these intertextual references see Hirschberger (1991) 169–171; De Temmerman (2014) 92–93.

μὲν αἰδούμενος, στήναι δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος 1.1.7).<sup>75</sup> The course of events, however, subjects him to a (not unknown in the *Odyssey*) maturing process,<sup>76</sup> which permits him, in the two final books, to impress both as warrior and as orator even more than Odysseus.<sup>77</sup> Chariton ends also his tale with the triumphant reunion of the two lovers, who in the end characteristically look in no way inferior to their Homeric model, but on the contrary symbolise their creator's ambition to win his contemporary public over to this new genre of prose narrative.<sup>78</sup> The dialogue with the *Odyssey* and its protagonist proves to be a basic element in this literary endeavour, and would remain so in the subsequent history of the ancient novel.<sup>79</sup>

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- 75 For this comparison see Jones (2012) 118; De Temmerman (2014) 106–107, who notes that it functions *inter alia* as a foreshadowing for Chaereas' *aristeia*, which will be motivated in fact by erotic concerns, as this hero will openly admit (7.1.11, 8.4.2). See in general Alvarez (1997) for the erotic element as the driving force in Chariton. For the literary motif of Eros as warrior used in the above passage see Ζαμάρου (2017) 268–269.
- 76 For the *Odyssey* as the story of a gradual change in the character of its protagonist see Rutherford (1986). Dowden (1999) describes this evolution of Odysseus in terms of a *rite of passage*. For Chaereas as a hero who goes through a corresponding maturing process see Schmeling (1974) 134–135, 137–138; Lalanne (1998).
- 77 It is interesting that in this last part of the work the warrior Chaereas appears to be superior to Achilles as well, insofar as he combines the sentiment of rage with the virtue of *sophrosyne* (cf. ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀδιηγῆται τούτῳ ταράχῳ μόνος ἐσωφρόνησε Χαιρέας 7.4.9); see in this regard Scourfield (2003) 172–175.
- 78 It is not by chance that Chariton places the events he narrates not in his own time but in the "golden" 5th century BCE, the historic period considered to be as glorious as the mythical age of the Homeric heroes; see Müller (1976) 132, who points out that this was the only way of avoiding a comical effect of the Homeric quotations. See also Barchiesi (1988) 356–357 with n. 4, who stresses that the epic background of this novel was not intended to be an object of parody, as is the case with works like Petronius' *Satyricon*, but a tribute to an older and different literary form. In writers like Achilles Tatius or Longus, by contrast, who are influenced by the comic-realistic novel, the dialogue with Homer aims no longer at the *aemulatio* of a respected literary forebear but at an ironic undermining of it. See Morales (2004) 66; Fusillo (2006) 297–300.
- 79 The principal example is of course Heliodorus, whose imitation of Homer had obviously taken shape under the influence of Chariton's corresponding intertextual practice; see Tilg (2010) 144–145, who moreover detects in this aspect of the former's work an "anxiety of influence" due to Chariton. For a comparison of Homeric *mimesis* in Xenophon of Ephesus and Chariton see Tagliabue (2017) 183–184.

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# Quintus Smyrnaeus “As a Great Emulator and Zealous Admirer of Homer”

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## 1 Introduction

The *Posthomerica* by Quintus Smyrnaeus, a poet, who probably lived in the third century CE, is a Greek epic poem consisting of about 8,800 verses in fourteen books (λόγοι). The Latin title *Posthomerica* translates the Greek “τὰ μεθ’ Ὀμηρον” (or “τὰ μετὰ τὸν Ὀμηρον” or “οἱ μεθ’ Ὀμηρον λόγοι”) used in some manuscripts. It includes all the events of the Trojan War after the *Iliad* (the death of Hector and the return of his corpse to Troy) and before the *Odyssey*. Books 1–3 deal with the death of Penthesileia, Memnon, and Achilles; books 4–5 with the funeral games held in Achilles’ honor, the contest between Ajax and Odysseus over the hero’s armour, and the consequent madness and suicide of Ajax. Books 6–8 narrate Eurypylus’ and Neoptolemus’ exploits for the Trojans and the Greeks respectively until the death of Eurypylus; books 9–10 the retrieval of Philoctetes from Lemnos and the death of Paris. Books 11–13 report the last attack of the Greeks against the Trojans in front of the city of Ilion, the construction of the wooden horse, and the subsequent destruction of the city. The epic ends with book 14: the sacrifice of Polyxena over the grave of Achilles, the departure of the Greeks, and their dispersal by the storm. The structure of the work is reminiscent of the three poems of the *Epic Cycle*: Books 1–4 correspond to the *Aithiopis*, 5–10 to the *Little Iliad*, and 11–14 to the *Iliupersis*.

It is very likely that Quintus had access to the *Cyclic* material not through textbooks but through the poems themselves.<sup>1</sup> The *Epic Cycle* could be found but was not so popular. Because of its lack of poetic unity it was considered inferior to the Homeric epics; hence, Quintus was offered the opportunity to compose a narrative sequence that could replace the *Cycle*. Quintus’ intention was to fill the gap between the two Homeric epics in close imitation of the language and style of Homer; such an intention accounts for the high degree of ‘Homericity’ throughout the work. Three manuscripts which transmit the text

1 Unlike most scholars I maintain along with Dihle (1989) 436–438, Boyten (2010) 18f. and Tomasso (2010) 15f. that the *Epic Cycle* was still in circulation during the 3rd century CE.

place the *Posthomeric* between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*<sup>2</sup> and Constantine Lascaris (1434–1501), an emigrant Byzantine scholar and philologist, who in 1496 produced a hand-written copy of the whole text, recognised that Quintus was Ὀμηρικώτατος in every respect and this characterization was meant as a praise.<sup>3</sup>

ποιητῆς ἄριστος ἐγένετο καὶ μέγιστος ζηλωτῆς τοῦ Ὀμήρου πάντ' ἐκεῖθεν ἀρυσάμενος, πᾶσαν ποιητικὴν μίμησιν, λέξεις, φράσιν, παραβολάς, διαγραφάς, γνώμας καὶ τᾶλλα, ὅσα τέλειον ποιητὴν ἀποφαίνει. Ὀμηρικώτατος δὲ γενόμενος ἠθέλησε τὰ τῷ Ὀμήρῳ παραλελειμμένα τῆς Ἰλιάδος ὁμηρικῶς ποιῆσαι.

Quintus was a very good poet and great emulator, zealous admirer of Homer drawing everything from him, poetic reproduction of the Homeric text in all aspects, i.e., diction, style, similes, outline, gnomai, and the rest, which declare him as a perfect poet. As he was so much like Homer, he wanted to do in a Homer-like way what had been left over by Homer from the *Iliad*.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the Italian humanist and poet Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), who quotes the *Posthomeric* in his commentary on Statius' *Silvae*, often confuses Quintus with Homer.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that Quintus was regarded as identical with Homer. These two examples clearly show that in their early Renaissance reception the *Posthomeric* were regarded of equal artistic value with the Homeric epics. However, despite its manifold similarities with Homer (language and style, plot, characters) the *Posthomeric* did not survive long as a popular or influential work after the Renaissance.

Greek poetry under the Roman Empire was neglected by scholars for a long time. The concentration on authors and poets of the classical period combined with the narrow approach to poetic originality characteristic of 19th century German scholarship resulted in the marginalization of the poets of late antiquity. Until the 20th century most critics focused on the question on the sources from which these poets drew (*Quellenforschung*). This also applied to Quintus. It was suggested that Quintus strongly imitated classical Greek authors and Hellenistic and Roman models with little (if any at all) innovative and creative

2 Vindobonensis Phil. Gr. 5 (R); Cantabrigiensis, Coll. Corp. Christi 81 (C); Marcianus gr. Z 456 (V).

3 Carvounis (2005) 16.

4 See also Baumbach and Bär (2007) 16 with n. 74.

5 Cf. Vian (1997) 985–987; Baumbach and Bär (2007) 16–17.

power.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of Hermann (1840, 257) most scholars considered Quintus not as a “συγγραφεύς” but rather as a “συρραφεύς”.<sup>7</sup> The second half of the last century saw the rise of a critical reassessment of the trend mentioned. Vian (1963–1969), to whom we owe a three volume critical edition of the *Posthomerica* with French translation<sup>8</sup> as well as Luigi Ferrari (1963) deserve to be mentioned. Since the beginning of the 21st century full-scale commentaries on individual books of the poem and scholarly publications suggest that Quintus is not merely rewriting a Homeric story or filling a gap between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Their examination of the intertextual relations between the *Posthomerica* and the Homeric epics shows that Quintus like, for example, Apollonius Rhodius is competing with Homer in many ways.<sup>9</sup> All of these works have contributed to a reevaluation of Quintus’ poetic qualities and creative power.

Following the remark of Constantinos Lascaris which was mentioned above, I will concentrate on Quintus of Smyrna as a μέγιστος ζηλωτής τοῦ Ὀμήρου (“great emulator, zealous admirer of Homer”) through an examination of the main epic features (diction, style, metre, heroic figures, divine apparatus, outline, similes, ekphrasis, gnōmai) of his work.

6 On *Quellenforschung* in the *Posthomerica* see mainly the detailed treatment of Vian (1959) 17–144 and more recently the observations of James (2005) 367–369 and the comments of Bär (2009) 29–30.

7 Both terms stem from Kakridis (1962) 10. Cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1912) 218–219; Glover (1901) 91–92. For negative judgements see Lloyd-Jones (1969) 101; Nesselrath (1997a) 286; Sirinelli (1993) 433–434; Appel (1994) 1–13; Cantilena (2001) 57–58. More negative views from the 20th century can be found in the introductory essay by Baumbach and Bär (2007) 23–24; cf. also Gärtner (2010) Vol. I viii n. 1.

8 Cf. his book Vian (1959). Pompella (1979, 1987, 1993) published a three-volume edition of the *Posthomerica* with Italian translation and his one-volume critical edition (without translation): Pompella (2002). See also the Italian edition of the *Posthomerica* with thorough introduction, text and notes as a joint project under the direction of Lelli (2013). An adequate summary of the editions, translations, and monographies on the *Posthomerica* since their *editio princeps* offer Baumbach and Bär (2007) 17–23.

9 Campbell’s (1981) commentary on the book 12 of the *Posthomerica* is the only commentary published in the 20th century. Among the studies which offer a re-evaluation of Quintus Smyrnaeus in view of his intertextual relations with the Homeric epics the following should be mentioned: James and Lee (2000); Carvounis (2005; 2019); Baumbach, Bär and Dümmler (2007); Spinoula (2008); Bär (2009); Boyten (2010); Tomasso (2010); Maciver (2012a); Tsomis (2018a; 2018b); Scheijnen (2018).

## 2 Diction, Style, and Metre

The first point to be made concerning the language and style of the *PosthomERICA* in comparison with that of Homer is that no other extant poem reproduces the language of its model so closely as this epic. Paschal<sup>10</sup> finds 576 non-Homeric words out of ca. 3,800 or 3,912 according to Bär's enumeration;<sup>11</sup> these represent approximately 15% of Quintus' total vocabulary. His proximity to Homeric language reaches an impressive 85%. 162 of these non-Homeric words first occur in Quintus. Paschal,<sup>12</sup> who repeatedly emphasizes the proximity of the language of the *PosthomERICA* to Homeric language, explains the non-Homeric elements as an influence of the evolution of the Greek language. He maintains that of the 162 words which first occur in Quintus only a small number can be considered as true neologisms, while most of these words must have belonged to hexameter poems now lost, probably the *Cyclic* epics. Quintus composed hexametric verses and 95% of these words are polysyllable and compounds, which can neither be adapted to the metrical forms of dramatic poetry nor are appropriate for the prose. The existence of a Homeric mould behind these words is perhaps indicative of Quintus' efforts to create neologisms.<sup>13</sup>

The question is whether we are dealing with a slavish, flattened, and perhaps unsuccessful imitation of the Homeric diction or we should see in the work of Quintus the continuation of the Hellenistic epic tradition. Since the middle of the 1980s Chrysafis (1985), Giangrande (1986), and Appel (1993; 1994a; 1994b) have shown that despite the close link with Homeric language Quintus follows the epic mannerisms of Apollonius Rhodius and the intertextual technique of *ars allusiva*. Key terms of Hellenistic allusion and citation technique such as *imitatio cum variatione*, *oppositio in imitando*, and *self-variation* also serve as constituent features in the language of the *PosthomERICA*.

According to Vian<sup>14</sup> there are 720 Homeric adjectives and 220 non-Homeric ones in the *PosthomERICA*. Of a total of 180 formulae in the *PosthomERICA*, most of which are very short (consisting in most cases of a noun and an adjective or a noun and a dependent genitive), only 76 are precisely Homeric, while 15 of them occur in the Homeric epics only once or twice. Quintus often adopts Homeric formulae and varies them. This is a significant feature in the formulaic

10 Paschal (1904) 22–36.

11 Cf. Bär (2009) 46 with n.142. However, he does not include the proper names.

12 Paschal (1904) 27.

13 Cf. κυανοκρήδεμνος (*PH* 4.115, 381; 5. 121) – λιπαροκρήδεμνος (*Il.* 18.382), καλλικρήδεμνος (*Od.* 4.623); βαθυκνήμις (*PH* 1.55) – ἑυκνήμις (*Il.* 1.17 etc.); χαλκοκνήμις (*Il.* 7.41); ὀλιγοσθενέων (*PH* 8.460) – ὀλιγοδρανέων (*Il.* 15.246; 16.843; 22.337).

14 Vian (1959) 182–192.

character of the *Posthomeric* and Vian was the first to observe it, though not in terms of originality. As James and Lee<sup>15</sup> (2000.26) point out, only a small proportion of them have a noteworthy frequency of 6 times or more. Seldom do formulae occur as long as a complete line. Bär (2009.559) records 26 cases of a single line repeated once, one case of a single line repeated twice,<sup>16</sup> three times,<sup>17</sup> and four times.<sup>18</sup> There is also one case of a pair of lines repeated once (3.465–6 = 5.538–9), the longest word for word repetition in the *Posthomeric*. This infrequency of Homeric repetitiveness which also appears in Apollonius Rhodius constitutes a *recusatio* of Homeric technique. Nevertheless, we can often find in Quintus conspicuous repetitions of words and phrases within a text of few lines. This practice has been criticized by Castiglioni (1921, 39) as a sign of Quintus's lack of creativity. All the more so, apart from the fact that these repetitions often bear to the text a semantic and/or a poetic significance,<sup>19</sup> Quintus creates with this practice the impression of a kind of repetitiveness, a Homerising one. Thus, he refers to Homeric repetitiveness not by imitating but by varying it.<sup>20</sup>

Appel proved that approximately 10% of the vocabulary of the *Posthomeric* (i.e., about 410 words out of a total vocabulary of about 4600 words) consists of Homeric *hapax legomena*. The poet regularly uses this vocabulary in formal and/or semantic variation against his Homeric model in an attempt to activate, evoke, and suggest various possible meanings. They turn out to be favorite words (*Lieblingswörter*).<sup>21</sup> By adapting Homeric *hapax legomena* Quintus – as well as other epic poets, such as Apollonius – demonstrates not only his erudition but also the potential for making intertextual links.<sup>22</sup> Giagrande (1986) shows by means of selected examples that Quintus aligns himself with the Hellenistic tradition through techniques like the commenting usage of Homeric rarities/*glossai*; e.g., *hapax* oder *dis legomena* (*interpretatio*

15 James and Lee (2000) 26.

16 *PH* 3.723=5.654=10.485.

17 *PH* 1.716=7.3=9.3=11.332.

18 *PH* 7.219 =7.700=8.146 =12.66=13.237: "Ὡς φάμενον προσέειπεν Ἀχιλλεύος ὄβριμος υἱός ("So he spoke. To him Achilles' sturdy son said"). This is actually the only occurrence in the Homeric formulaic manner.

19 E.g., *PH* 10.11–18 and the function of the repetition of μένοντες, μίμνωμεν, μένοντες in lines 12, 14, 16.

20 Cf. Chrysafis (1985) 27–32.

21 For example: ἀταρβής is a Homeric *hapax* (*Il.* 13.299). The epithet characterises in the *Iliad* Phobos as son and companion of Ares in the battle. In the *Posthomeric* it often occurs (over twenty times) and has a wide usage. Cf. Vian and Battegay (1984) s.v. and Appel (1994a) 20, who remarks that Quintus does not follow Homer in the use of this adjective.

22 Cf. Kumpf (1984) 5.

*Homeri*), the literary “hidden” reference to grammatical or text-critical problems of Homeric philology or of variants of the same word for the purpose of self-variation. Quintus can also practice the *interpretatio Homeri* regarding rare Homeric words that are obscure in their meanings, often giving to these rare Homeric words a new shade of meaning.

Another feature that Bär has highlighted in his study<sup>23</sup> is the following: in the use of *hapax* or *dis legomena* Quintus quantitatively comes closer to the *dictio Apollonii* than to the *dictio Homeri*. Approximately 45% of the vocabulary used by Quintus is treated as *hapax* or *dis legomena*. Nearly half of all words in the *Argonautica* are *hapax* or *dis legomena*, while in Homer the use of *hapax* or *dis legomena* is about 30%. Nevertheless, the *Posthomerica* seem strongly Homeric. Some of the possible explanations for this are the usage of formulaic phrases, the frequently recurring adjectives (favorite words) and the repetition of certain words within a confined text space, with the latter giving the impression that Quintus makes use of the Homeric repetitiveness without imitating his model. *Dis legomena* are sometimes repeated one behind the other at a very short distance thus contributing to Quintus’s repetitiveness.

Based on Köchly’s (1850.xxxii–xlvi) and Vian’s (1959.212–49) full-scale and systematic studies on the metrical practice of Quintus I will focus on the main features of the metre of Quintus in comparison with Homer. Quintus’s metrical practice is close to Homer’s. The frequency of three-syllable dactyls is overwhelming. Spondees appear mostly in the first and the second foot. *Versus spondiaci*, which Nonnos and his school avoid, amount according to Vian to 6,7% (a higher percentage than in Homeric epics: 3,8%). Verses with three spondees, which occur in Homer about once every 12 lines, occur in Quintus once in 144. Four spondees in a verse occur in the *Posthomerica* only once (*PH* 6.365, expressing effort; cf. 0,58 % in the *Iliad*). Unlike Homer, Quintus shares with the most late epic poets the preference for the feminine (trochaic) caesura over masculine in the third foot. Regarding hiatus Quintus largely follows Homer but he departs from Homer in using the Attic corruption frequently. Like Homer Quintus avoids the correspondence of sense and line ends by often having a sense pause after the first word of line.<sup>24</sup>

23 Bär (2009) 60–61.

24 For a detailed study of the posthomeric formulae and diction see most recently Greensmith (2020) 93–125.

### 3 Heroic Figures

The modern approach to the interpretation of the *Posthomerica* lies mainly in the area of intertextuality within the *Posthomerica*. The term intertextuality comes to replace the term *Quellenforschung*, which has dominated the interpretation of the *Posthomerica* almost until the end of the last century. Quintus knew his Homer well. This is demonstrated by his engagement with Homer. Apart from the usage of Homeric language and style, the Homeric poetics in the *Posthomerica* suggest that we are dealing with a story that strives to kick off exactly from where the *Iliad* stopped. Unlike other extant epic poems from Homer to Nonnus, the *Posthomerica*, the most “Homeric” of epic poems after Homer, begins without a proem. There is no use of the imperative, no invocation of a deity or muse, no direct reference to the theme of this poem that would introduce the reader to the poems’ aims and meanings. This kind of innovation, with which we come across from the very beginning of the *Posthomerica*, seems not difficult to explain. It implies the intention of the poet to carry on the *Iliad*, though without a central theme, around which the epic narration will be developed. A close intertextual reading of the opening lines reveals, however, that there is a kind of introduction, though not a proem in its traditional sense and structure. Bär<sup>25</sup> and Maciver<sup>26</sup> rightly point out that the first line of the *Posthomerica* summarizes the whole *Iliad*, echoing its first and last line. In the following lines (2–17) Quintus, through analepsis, refers to the end of the *Iliad*, thus carefully connecting the events of the poems in a poetological manner.<sup>27</sup> The sequel of the *Iliad* can start now.

Quintus maintains the Homeric characters almost unaltered in his epic. He broadly adheres to the Homeric practice of presenting characters through a more or less even balance of speech and narrative. Achilles does not lose a moment of his heroic masculinity in the *Posthomerica*. Quintus often enhances Achilles’ Iliadic features: he is aggressive, violent, and bellicose, characteristics that evoke the hero’s Homeric past. Although Achilles withdraws from the battlefield in the first book of the *Iliad*, his character even *in absentia* is dominant throughout the work, which resounds with his wrath (μῆνις). A similar treatment can be found in Quintus. Achilles remains a dominant figure in the *Posthomerica* even after his death. Through his deeds he is dominant in the first two books and at the beginning of the third book. In the first part of the third book he is killed by Apollo, as a result of his immoderate rage. His disrespectful

25 Bär (2007) 39 and (2009) 138–147.

26 Maciver (2012a) 31–33.

27 See also Tomasso (2010) 46–56.



behavior against Apollo (*PH* 3.46–52) is beyond human limits. The subsequent fight over his corpse, the laments, the analeptic narrations of his great exploits, the funeral games in his honour (reminiscent of the funeral games in honour of Patroclus in book 23 of the *Iliad*) and the description of his shield cover the rest of the book 3 and books 4 and 5. The suicide of Ajax narrated in book 5 signals a critical moment for the Achaeans, since they lose the next best hero to Achilles. There is the crying need for Neoptolemus' coming, which was already announced by Hera in book 3 (vv. 119–22). From book 7 onwards Neoptolemus takes over Achilles' role as a central character, a *novus Achilleus*. Quintus does not lose a moment to emphasize the similarity between father and son both through the primary narrator and the character speeches. Neoptolemus' heroic deeds can be compared with those of his father, both in the *Iliad* and in the *Posthomerica*. Actually, in the *Posthomerica* Quintus through his use of Neoptolemus makes sure that Achilles is not forgotten. Neoptolemus by wearing his father's armor and by wielding his spear honors his high birth and pays respect to his father's memory. He excels in war and plays a central role in books 7 and 8; nevertheless, he can hardly be considered a central figure in the epic. Achilles' son bears some Homeric characteristics resembling his Iliadic father, such as the ability to speak prudently, to empathize and to show consideration for others, characteristics that are almost absent from the posthomeric Achilles.<sup>28</sup> Odysseus, as a hero, keeps his Homeric traits by incorporating μῆτις and δόλος alongside with βίη.<sup>29</sup> Darker aspects of his personality, so often emphasized by the tragedians, have no place in the *Posthomerica*.

However, as Mansur<sup>30</sup> points out, Quintus shows a preference for the idealization of some of his characters by emphasizing their virtues and minimizing their faults. The behavior of Philoctetes in the *Posthomerica* contrasts not only with that of Achilles in a similar Iliadic situation but also with the hero's own post-Homeric attitude to his return to the Greek army (cf. Sophocles' *Philoctetes*).<sup>31</sup> Two other characteristic examples are Agamemnon and Paris. Agamemnon in the *Posthomerica* does not behave arrogantly, like he does in

28 The primary narrator refers to Achilles' benevolence and empathy for others only in the Myrmidons' lament (*PH* 3. 422–26) and the lament of the slave women (*PH* 3. 544–50). In her lament Briseis emphasizes the good nature of Achilles as a life companion (*PH* 3.563–568). For the character and role of Neoptolemus in the *Posthomerica* see (in detail) Calero Secall (1998) 101–110; Toledano Vargas (2002) 19–42; Boyten (2007) 307–336 and (2010) 183–237; Tsomis (2018b) 239–246; Scheijnen (2018) 178–225.

29 The use of δόλος in book 12 points to a new direction, even though the old, epic values (impersonated by Achilleus and Ajax) are not entirely displaced by what Neoptolemus stands for. Throughout the *Posthomerica* nowhere does δόλος take over βίη.

30 Mansur (1940) 1–81.

31 See Schmitz (2007) 77.

the *Iliad*. Paris, on the other hand, keeps up his heroic ambivalence from the *Iliad*. In his attempt to minimize the hero's Iliadic faults Quintus may overlook any negative criticism of Paris' cowardice and his erotic madness for women (γυναιμανία); however, he charges him with his abandonment of Oenone (*PH* 10.259–489), who is not mentioned in the *Iliad*. Oenone's betrayed love affair and the heroine's consequent suicide cast a bleak shadow on Paris' death.

#### 4 Divine Apparatus

Quintus adopts the Homeric divine machinery in its entirety in his narration of the Trojan War. Regarding the direct or indirect intervention of the gods the poet not only respected the Homeric tradition but even widened it and enriched it. Quintus's 91 occurrences of divine interventions establish a larger number in proportion to the *Iliad*, where we find 142, although some of them seem rather unmotivated and superficial. With respect to the deities involved, Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Ares, and Thetis participate in both epics, while Hera who has an important part in the *Iliad*, does not intervene in the *Posthomeric*. *Il.* 3.374–82; 5.311–453; 16.788–804; 20.291–342, 438–44; 21.596–8; 22.214–47 and in 22.276–7 occurs in the *Posthomeric* only twice: Apollo fatally wounds Achilles with an arrow (*PH* 3.30–138); Aphrodite removes Aineias in a mist (*PH* 11.288–97). The various efforts of the gods to intervene in the battle mainly impinge on the reaction of Zeus, who by throwing his lightning prevents them from doing any harm to the warriors. Unlike Homer, gods in the *Posthomeric* are subordinate to Zeus and Fate; they avoid quarrels among themselves and they are deeply concerned with human suffering. Quintus in his depiction of gods alludes to specific Homeric scenes, which he alters or varies in order to portray his gods in a much more sympathetic way. According to Wenglinsky (2002) the poet achieves his goal by minimizing and even avoiding negative aspects in the portrayal of gods which ancient commentators on Homer criticised as unsuitable or inappropriate.

Unlike Homer the posthomeric primary narrator introduces an anonymous god in his narrative; for instance: μακάρων τις keeps Ajax and Achilles away from the battle (1.380), θεῶν τις encourages Deiphobus to lead the Trojans into the battle (9.80); θεός gives Aeneas power (11.408); at the bidding of some god Diomedes held his sword away from Ilioneus for a little (13.187); θεός ἤε τις ἄτη threw Teucer painfully against a shoot of a tamarisk (4.201; cf. *Il.* 23.774, but there it is Athena who makes Ajax fall upon a slippery path). The use of “δαίμων” does not always coincide with the Homeric one. Like Homer Quintus uses the term as a synonym of god or gods (e.g., 12.254), but unlike Homer

(cf. *Il.* 3.420) he never explicitly names the Olympians as *daimones*. In *PH* 9.229 and 14.628 in the expression “θεός τις καὶ δαίμων” they are clearly differentiated, but the difference is not put in concrete terms. The action of *daimones* – unlike Homer – is almost uniformly hostile to mortals: only in *PH* 9.229 and 14.628 out of about twenty they are benevolent. In the *Posthomeric* the term “δαίμων” mainly characterizes inferior divinities.

The warfare *daimones* play a greater role in the *Posthomeric* in comparison with Homer. As in Homer there are personifications of Deimos (*PH* 5.29; cf. *Il.* 11.37; also 10.57; 11.13; cf. *Il.* 4.440); Enyo (*PH* 11x: e.g., 1.365; 2.525; 5.29 etc.; cf. *Il.* 5.333; 592); Eris (*PH* 16x; e.g., *PH* 2.460, 540; 8.68, 191 etc.; 6x in the *Iliad*); Kydoimos (*PH* 2x: 1.308; 6.350; 2x in the *Iliad*: 5.593; 18.535); and Phobos (*PH* 3x: *PH* 5.29; 10.57; 11.12; 4x in the *Iliad*). The personified Moros and Polemos occur only in the *Posthomeric*.<sup>32</sup> Oethros (*PH* 2.486) and Hysminai (*PH* 5.36) appear personified only in Quintus.

The personified figures of Fate take in Quintus a more important role than in Homer and Apollonius Rhodius. Just by the large number of their appearances they are clearly highlighted against the Olympian gods. Physical intervention is rarely depicted. Their appearance is not described, for they are not recognizable to mortals. By far Ker or Keres occur most frequently, then Aisa and finally Moira or Moirai. Just this necessitates a re-evaluation of them from previous epic, particularly from Homer. All of them are usually perceived as negative deities associated with death; they can intervene and thereby cause death, but also other things. They are all responsible for the destinies of men. The theme of the uncertain relationship of Zeus to the forces of Fate, which remains undetermined even in Homer, often appears in Quintus, thus emphasizing the tension. Keres, as Zeus himself says, are even relentless to the gods (2.172), Zeus, who is never characterized in the *Posthomeric* as *metieta* („all-wise“), yields to the Moirai (13.558–61), Aisa is a respecter neither of Zeus the mighty nor any other of the immortals (11.272–77), etc. Conversely, the omnipotence of Zeus is emphasized (e.g., 2.597–8, 662–4; 4.56–61; 8.458–60; 14.97–100) and Keres as well Aisa are sometimes subordinated to him (e.g., 2.507–13; 10.329–31), or the Moirai serve Zeus’ Plan (3.755–62). The fact that the powers of Fate have a central position in Quintus may indicate a Stoic influence, but the ambiguity regarding their relation to the Olympians reflects, as in Homer, how incomprehensible Fate – usually painful and arbitrary – remains for people.<sup>33</sup>

32 Personified Moros in: *PH* 8.325; 14.206); Polemos in 8.426. Personified Moros occurs first in Hes., *Theog.* 211; personified Polemos is attested in Pindar, fr. 78.

33 On the personified figures of Fates see in detail Wenglingsky (2002) and Gärtner (2007) 211–240.

## 5 Similes

One of the most striking similarities between Homer and the *Posthomerica* is the abundance of similes. In this Quintus follows the *Iliad*, but he practically outdoes his model. His average frequency of one simile every 39.5 lines is much higher than that of the *Iliad* (one every 76.2 lines).<sup>34</sup> As James<sup>35</sup> remarks, Quintus follows in this respect Oppian's *Halieutica* with one simile every 36.9 lines. Book 1 contains an unusual concentration of 35 similes.

Following his Homeric model in the use of similes Quintus strives on one hand to prove himself Homeric and, on the other hand, in surpassing his model he makes it obvious that he saw similes as something more than an inescapable trait of epic poetry. As Paschal<sup>36</sup> (1904.39) rightly notes, Quintus always strives for explicit correspondence between simile and narrative. Unlike Homer, Quintus shows a preference to clusters or accumulation of similes.<sup>37</sup> Homer can be detected directly behind the 90% of the similes used by Quintus. Wild and domestic animals and the forces of wind and nature, which are also in abundance in Homer, are his favorite referents.

As mentioned above the similes of the *Posthomerica* is the most Homeric part of the whole text. So their texts always evoke a thorough examination of the intertextual relationship between them and the Homeric texts. Quintus excludes any slavish imitation of the Homeric model: the poet varies, combines, or splits his Homeric models and so emulates them. The *Posthomerica's* similes are very often in dialogue with the Homeric ones. In order to appreciate their virtues and their contribution to the narrative (meaning, function and dramatic effect on characterization) we always have to read them through their Homeric intertexts. In this respect the composition of *Posthomerica's* similes echoes the relevant Hellenistic technique. The intertextual dynamic and Quintus's striving for emulation towards his Homeric model can be illustrated through two examples of similes in the *Posthomerica*: 8.329–336a, examined and discussed by Maciver,<sup>38</sup> and 10.170–7.

In the eighth book Ares has joined the battle to help the Trojans, making the Greeks flee (8, 239–328). Only Neoptolemus remains unafraid and carries on his slaughter of the Trojans (8, 329–30). In lines 331–6a Neoptolemus is

34 Cf. Maciver (2012a) 126. The *Posthomerica* having approximately half the length of the *Iliad* has 29 more long similes than the *Iliad*.

35 James (2004) xxv–vi.

36 Paschal (1904) 39.

37 See James (2004) xxvi.

38 Maciver (2012a) 173–181.

compared to a young boy swatting at a swarm of flies around a milk-pail, who takes delight in the task (331–6a):

Ὡς δ' ὅτε τις μύησι περὶ γλάγος ἐρχομένησι  
 χεῖρα περιρρίψῃ κοῦρος νέος, αἶ δ' ὑπὸ πληγῇ  
 τυτθῇ δαμνάμεναι σχεδὸν ἄγγεος ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαι  
 θυμὸν ἀποπνεῖουσι, πάϊς δ' ἐπιτέρπεται ἔργῳ  
 ὥς ἄρα φαίδιμος υἱὸς ἀμειλίχτου Ἀχιλλῆος  
 γήθεεν ἀμφὶ νέκυσσι. 335

Just as a young boy slaps his hand over the flies that come around the milk and they, subdued by his little stroke, breathe out their spirit on all sides near the milk pail and the young boy takes delight in his game, so the brilliant son of merciless Achilles triumphed over the corpses.

The function of this simile is to emphasise that war to Neoptolemus is an amusement. The Trojans (flies) are the playthings of Neoptolemus (πάϊς δ' ἐπιτέρπεται ἔργῳ: 334). With this simile Quintus evokes three Iliadic texts: 2.469–73; 4.130–3 and 16.641–4. The poet makes use of these three passages in his own simile activating so its full range of meanings. The first Iliadic intertext 2.469–73:

ἢ ὅτε μυιάων ἀδινάων ἔθνεα πολλά,  
 αἶ τε κατὰ σταθμὸν ποιμνήϊον ἠλάσκουσιν  
 ὥρῃ ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τε γλάγος ἄγγεα δεύει,  
 τόσσοι ἐπὶ Τρῳέεσσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί  
 ἐν πεδίῳ ἴσταντο, διαρραΐσαι μεμαῶτες. 470

Just as the many swarms of loud buzzing flies, who flit about in a sheep pen in the springtime, when the pails spill milk. Just so many long-haired Achaeans stood against the Trojans on the camp eager to destroy.

Apart from the clear verbal echoes between the Iliadic and the Posthomeric text the Iliadic simile emphasizes the strength and the courage of the Trojans. Thus, the seemingly inferior Trojans are transformed into worthy opponents on the battlefield. The second Iliadic intertext, 4.127–33, brings a different dimension to the simile in the *Posthomeric*:

Οὐδὲ σέθεν, Μενέλαε, θεοὶ μάκαρες λελάθοντο  
 ἀθάνατοι, πρώτη δὲ Διὸς θυγάτηρ ἀγγελεῖν,

ἦ τοι πρόσθε στάσα βέλος ἔχεπευκὲς ἄμυνεν.  
 ἦ δὲ τόσον μὲν ἔεργεν ἀπὸ χροὸς, ὥς ὅτε μήτηρ  
 παιδὸς ἐέργη μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἡδέϊ λέξεται ὕπνω·  
 αὐτῇ δ' αὐτ' ἴθυνεν, ὅθι ζωστήρος ὀχῆες  
 χρύσειοι σύνεχον καὶ διπλὸς ἦντετο θώρηξ.

130

The immortal gods did not forget you, Menelaus, first the daughter of Zeus, the forager, stood in front of you and kept off the sharp dart. So much did she keep away the arrow from his skin as when a mother keeps a fly away from a child lying in sweet slumber. She directed the arrow to the point, where the golden fastenings of Menelaus' belt joined, and where his double breastplate fitted together.

Apart from the involvement of flies and a child there are not verbal echoes between the Iliadic and the Posthomeric Text. In the *Iliad* it is the goddess who keeps away the arrow from Menelaus' skin as when a mother keeps a fly away from her sleeping child's skin. In the *Posthomeric* it is the child (Neoptolemus) who keeps away the flies from the milk by killing them. Because of this parallel the reader compares Neoptolemus to a god-figure. Whereas in the *Iliad*, Athena protects Menelaus by changing the course of the arrow, Neoptolemus fends for himself as if he were a god. By adapting this model, Quintus wants to illustrate the near-invincibility of Neoptolemus. The third Iliadic intertext for the Posthomeric simile is the simile found at 16.641–4a. The simile compares the swarm of warriors over the corpse of Sarpedon to flies that swarm over the milk pail spilling over in springtime:

οἱ δ' αἰεὶ περὶ νεκρὸν ὀμίλειον, ὥς ὅτε μυῖαι  
 σταθμῷ ἔνι βρομέωσι περιγλαγέας κατὰ πέλλας  
 ὥρη ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τε γλάγος ἄγγεα δεύει·  
 ὥς ἄρα τοι περὶ νεκρὸν ὀμίλειον.

And they thronged about the corpse, just as when flies roar in the pen down on the milk-pails full of milk in the springtime, when the pails spill over; just so they thronged about the corpse.

This passage is verbally very similar to *Il.* 2.469–71, the first intertext discussed above, and thus to our Posthomeric simile. Unlike in the Iliadic simile, where it is a corpse that attracts the Achaean warriors who are compared to flies, in the Posthomeric passage, the Trojans are attracted like flies to a live warrior, Neoptolemus, who exults over the corpses he makes. Due to his heroism

Neoptolemus makes the flies, the Trojans, into corpses. Through the three Iliadic intertexts (2.469–73, 4.130–3 and 16.641–7), the Posthomeric Neoptolemus who is compared with a boy swatting flies takes on the status of invincibility and near-divinity.

The verses 171–7 of the book 10 of the *Posthomeric* offer a simile that introduces Philoctetes' aristeia. Quintus modifies here the Iliad passage 5.87–94, a simile that introduces Diomedes' aristeia. The Posthomeric simile 10.170–7:

θῦνε γὰρ ἐν δῆϊοισιν ἀτειρέϊ ἴσος Ἄρηι	170
ἢ ποταμῷ κελάδοντι, ὃς ἔρκεα μακρὰ δαΐζει	
πλημμύρων, ὅτε λάβρον ὀρινόμενος περὶ πέτραις	
ἐξ ὀρέων ἀλεγεῖνὰ μεμιγμένος ἔρχεται ὄμβρω,	
ἀέναός περ ἐὼν καὶ ἀγάρροος, οὐδέ νυ τόν γε	
εἵργουσι<ν> προβλήτες ἀάσπετα παφλάζοντα·	175
ὥς οὔ τις Ποίαντος ἀγακλειτοῦ θρασὺν υἷα	
ἔσθενεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδὼν καὶ ἄπωθε πελάσσαι·	

For he was raging among the enemy like tireless Ares or like a sounding river, that destroys the long dykes by overflowing, when, violently stirred up around rocks, it comes down dangerously from the mountains, mixed with rain, ever-flowing and strong-flowing. And the forelands cannot hold it back as it blusters endlessly. So no man had the courage to approach the brave son of glorious Poeas, not even if he caught sight of him at a distance.

The Iliadic intertext 5.87–94:

θῦνε γὰρ ἄμ πεδίον ποταμῷ πλήθοντι ἐοικῶς	
χειμάρρῳ, ὃς τ' ὦκα ῥέων ἐκέδασσε γεφύρας·	
τὸν δ' οὔτ' ἄρ τε γέφυραι ἐεργμέναι ἰσχανώσιν,	
οὔτ' ἄρα ἔρκεα ἴσχει ἀλωάων ἐριθιλέων	90
ἐλθόντ' ἐξαπίνης ὅτ' ἐπιβρίσῃ Διὸς ὄμβρος·	
πολλὰ δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἔργα κατήριπε κάλ' αἰζηῶν·	
ὥς ὑπὸ Τυδεΐδῃ πυκιναὶ κλονέοντο φάλαγγες	
Τρώων, οὐδ' ἄρα μιν μίμνον πολέες περ ἐόντες.	

For he was raging across the plain like a winter torrent that in full flood has burst the dykes; no firmly fortified dykes hinder it, no fence of flourishing gardens can embank it, as it comes suddenly, when the rain from Zeus falls upon it heavily and many fine human works are thrown down

by it. So the dense phalanxes of the Trojans were driven in confusion by the son of Tydeus and many though they were, they could not abide his onslaught.

*PH* 10.170 begins as *Il.* 5.87 with “θύνε γάρ”. Quintus replaces the Homeric “ἄμ πεδίον” with “ἐν δηίοισιν” and adds the comparison with Ares, then he carries on with the river simile. Instead of “πλήθοντι” and “χειμάρρῳ” there is the attribute “κελάδοντι”. Then, as in Homer, follows a relative clause, in which with the same content but with different formulation the destruction of dykes is mentioned. In v. 171 instead of “γεφύρας” Quintus takes over “ἔρχεα” from *Il.* 5.90. Unlike *Il.* 5.89–91, which consists of a two-part sentence and a short ὅτε-clause – all of them with different subjects – in the *Posthomeric* a participle and a longer ὅτε-clause follows; the river remains subject. “πλημμύρων” at the beginning of v. 172 corresponds to “πλήθοντι”, which appears in the *Iliad*-simile earlier, in v. 87. However, the phrase “λάβρον ὀρινόμενος περὶ πέτραις” (v. 172b) has no equivalent in the *Iliad*-simile. v. 173 varies *Il.* 5.91 with “ἀλεγεινὰ” to intensify the verse. “ἀένανός περ ἑὼν καὶ ἀγάρροος” (v. 175) comes from Quintus. Only after v. 174a do we have a new subject. The statement, “and the forelands cannot hold it back as it blusters endlessly” (174b–175) replaces the foregoing Homeric statement (5.89–90): “no firmly fortified dykes hinder it, no fence of flourishing gardens can embank it”. The last motif of the *Iliadic* simile: “and many fine human works are thrown down by it” (5.92) does not appear in Quintus as well as a correspondence to the first part of the following Homeric ὥς-clause (5.93–4a). Quintus transforms the second part of the Homeric clause 5.94 b: “οὐδ’ ἄρα μιν μῖνον πολέες περ ἑόντες” into a laudatory remark about Philoctetes: “so no man had the courage to approach the brave son of glorious Poeas, not even if he caught sight of him at a distance” (vv. 176–7).

Quintus intended not only to vary but also to surpass this *Iliadic* simile. He aimed at presenting Philoctetes as a greater fighter than Diomedes. This is why he firstly compares him with Ares and lets then the river, which symbolizes Philoctetes, almost throughout as subject not only of finite verbs, but also of participial expressions intensifying so its overabundance, its violent surge against the rocks, its strong current, and its roaring. Through these features Quintus, in contrast not only to Homer, but also to his own text at 7.115–20 overloads his simile, although he mentions the destructive effect of the river only once, while Homer does it four times – in 5.89–90 indirectly; in *PH* 7. 115–220 this occurs three times. The verb δαῖζω, which mainly refers in Homer and in Quintus to wounding or killing in the battle<sup>39</sup> is used in v. 171 for the

39 Cf. *Il.* 11.497; 17.535; 18.236; 19.319; 21.33, 147; 22.72; *PH* 1.324, 344; 2.169, 377; 3.324; 6.355; 9.181; 10. 195; 11.154, 416.



disastrous effect of the river alluding so to Philoctetes' fatal actions. It is also noteworthy that in Homer *πλημυρίς* (a hapax, Od. 9.486), *παφλάζω* (also a hapax, Il. 13.798 in the form *παφλάζοντα*) and *ἀγάρροος* (cf. Il. 2.845; 12.30) are in connection with the sea and not with rivers. The impetus of the river indirectly gets the dimension of a vigorously agitated sea. So Philoctetes' rushing seems to the reader particularly boisterous.

Spinoula, Maciver, and recently Greensmith (2020, 138–52) have shown that the *Posthomeric*'s similes cooperate in a more complicated manner in the whole text than do similes in Homer. Apart from the Homeric intertextual dynamic that enlarges and enriches the reading of the poem's characters, thus activating a possible latent meaning, and the poet's attempts to emulate with the Homeric text, there is also another aspect in the use of the similes in the *Posthomeric*: they provide structure and unity to the poem.<sup>40</sup>

## 6 Ekphrasis

Another feature expected as a part of an epic poem is the ekphrasis, a description of a work of art. The best known ekphrasis in Homer is the description of the Shield of Achilles in the book 18 of the *Iliad*. The same task is also undertaken by Quintus. He describes the Shield of Achilles at the beginning of the book 5. Thetis offers the armour of her dead son as a reward for rescuing his corpse. It is the same shield constructed by Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18 and given to Achilles by Thetis in *Iliad* 19. Unlike other parts of the Posthomeric text, in which the detection and application of various intertexts to the text relies on reader's thorough knowledge of the previous literature, here we have a basic and dominant intertext, well known to every reader: the Iliadic Shield of Achilles. One wonders why Quintus describes a work of art that Homer has already done in the best way. If Quintus were obliged to follow the tradition of an epic ecphraseis, he could content himself with the other two ecphraseis of his epic: with that of the Shield of Eurypylus (6.200–91), and of the baldrick and quiver of Philoctetes (10.179–205).

In principle, the poet remains consistent with its model, but also with his reader, who knows the Iliadic *ecphraseis*. However, an attentive reading of the scenes highlights the differences. The Posthomeric Shield description follows the Iliadic model by opening with a cosmological scene (5.6–16): sky, air, sea

40 Spinoula (2008, 34–35) observed a symmetrical pattern in the similes that refer to Neoptolemus and Eurypylus as lions. Maciver (2012a, 130–153) scrutinized the cross-referential character of the similes of the first book of the *Posthomeric*: they are often motivated in their subject manner and emphasis by preceding similes.

(5, 6–16), but then, for the rest of the scenes on the Shield, it becomes more difficult to associate the description with the Iliadic model in its subject matter and effect. Although it is a matter of the same piece of art described in the *Iliad*, the Posthomeric Shield of Achilles evinces strong originality. How does Quintus manage to convince that it is the same Iliadic work of art? The best solution is given through the verses 97–8:

Ἄλλα δὲ μυρία κείτο κατ' ἀσπίδα τεχνηέντως  
χερσὶν ὑπ' ἀθανάτης πυκινόφρονος Ἥφαίστοιο.

And other countless scenes had been depicted on the Shield skilfully constructed by the immortal hands of wise Hephaestus.

The emphasis on these two verses lies in the expression “ἄλλα δὲ μυρία”. This phrase conveys the implication that neither Homer nor Quintus described the Shield in its entirety. In the introduction to the description of the Homeric Shield *Il.* 18.481–2 we read: “αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ / ποίει δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίησι πραπίδεσσιν.” (and many works of art he (sc. Hephaestus) crafted on its surface with all his genius). This implies that also the Homeric primary narrator was not under the necessity of describing all the scenes. From the numerous scenes of the Shield that was given to Achilles both poets made a selection according to their poetical intentions regarding this piece of art. This seems confirmed by the fact that there are also some scenes that are similar to the Homeric ones, although with different diction. Quintus, who composed a Homeric-emulative text, presents a different account of the Shield. Like the Homeric primary narrator, the Posthomeric primary narrator had before him all the scenes that made up the Shield. For the most part, however, he deviates from the Homeric motifs and favors others thus taking the chance to reflect contemporary and philosophical influences and ideas such as the Mountain of *Arete* (5.49–56).<sup>41</sup>

By emphasizing the vividness of the scenes (*PH* 5.13, 24, 28, 42, 68, 84, 90, 96) Quintus gives the impression that he offers not only a better but also a more lifelike description. The Posthomeric ekphrasis can be viewed as a complementary work to the Homeric ekphrasis. Baumbach<sup>42</sup> has shown that the description of the Shield reflects the subsequent debate between Ajax and Odysseus (*PH* 5.181–316). Unlike Ajax Odysseus seems to incorporate in his speeches themes of the Shield emphasizing so his appreciation, his rhetorical attachment with this artwork and therefore proves to be a worthy owner.

41 See thoroughly Maciver (2007) 260–281; (2012a) 66–86.

42 Baumbach (2007) 118–124.

For Maciver<sup>43</sup> the Shield ekphrasis consisting of Homeric intertexts forms a *mise-en-abîme* of the whole epic.<sup>44</sup>

## 7 Gnomai

Another typical Homeric feature of which Quintus makes use is the *gnome*, i.e. a moral statement, a wisdom saying spoken by the narrator or by characters known for their wisdom or oratory skills in order to add the reason for an action or to amplify an argument. *Gnomai* also aim at a readership and create a didactic atmosphere to the poem. Comparing the number of *gnomai* in the *Posthomerica* to those in the *Iliad* we conclude that the *Posthomerica* makes a much more extensive use of them. To the 154 *gnomai* in the *Iliad* correspond 132 *gnomai* in the *Posthomerica*. On average, there is one *gnome* for every 66 lines of text in the *Posthomerica*, and one out of a total 102 lines on average in the *Iliad*. Of these *gnomai*, 33 are expressed by the primary narrator in the *Posthomerica*, unlike the Homeric epics, that have only three in the words of the Iliadic primary narrator,<sup>45</sup> and two in the words of the Odyssean primary narrator.<sup>46</sup> Of the 99 spoken *gnomai* in the *Posthomerica*, Nestor and Odysseus have the largest amount of *gnomai*: 19 and 11 respectively. Both of them are distinguished for their wisdom and oratorical skills.

Although the poet of the *Posthomerica* uses a Homeric device, and most often echoes Homeric situations or Homeric *gnomai* in his own *gnomai*, he combines, completes, restores, and corrects them with the philosophical tendencies and practical ethics prevalent in his time. Through a multitude of *gnomai* Quintus manages to unify his work, but at the same time he conveys the values of Posthomeric ethics.

Maciver<sup>47</sup> has offered a detailed discussion of the beginning of book 7, where Podaleirius is considering suicide after the death of his brother Machaon. Nestor (at 7.30) is called upon to console him and to prevent him from killing himself. He directs to him two consolatory and hortatory speeches, full of gnostic advice. The basic Homeric intertext comes from a famous Iliadic scene: the encounter between Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24.513–624. The Homeric intertexts (especially the passages about the jars of Zeus at 525–33 and the

43 Maciver (2012a) 48–66.

44 On the association between the Posthomeric ekphrasis of Achilles' shield and its Homeric model see also Tomasso (2010) 179–194.

45 Cf. *Il.* 16.688–90; 20.265–6 and 21.264.

46 Cf. *Od.* 5.79–80 and 16.161.

47 Maciver (2012a) 103–123.

*paradeigma* of Niobe at 599–620 and Odysseus' words to Achilles at *Il.* 19.225–33) can be easily detected in Nestor's words. We read Nestor's speeches working back to Homer, showing him to be a Homeric hero, which fulfils the intention of Quintus, but we also read in his words the philosophy of the post-Homeric world. For instance, the lines 70–9 of Nestor's second consolatory speech to Podaleirius echo the famous Iliadic passage of the jars of Zeus (24.525–33). The main difference lies in the roles of Zeus and the Fates. It is clear that Nestor gives Fate in his speech a role that supersedes the powerful place Zeus has in the *Iliad*: it is she who deals out the fortunes, not Zeus.<sup>48</sup> The *gnomai* given by Nestor reflect this post-Homeric, philosophically late intertextuality. Quintus forces us to read Nestor as the Iliadic Nestor, the wise and revered old man who consults the heroes. But the posthomeric Nestor's advice and exhortations are not clearly Homeric in their philosophical background.

## 8 Other Homeric Compositional Techniques

There are also other Homeric compositional techniques of which Quintus makes abundant use such as the *androktasiai* (battle scenes) and the laments. Regarding the narration of the battle scenes Quintus follows his Homeric model faithfully. Unlike in Homer we find in these scenes attractive descriptions of locations of the dead's origin often referring to a *thaumasion* or cultic aetiology (e.g., *PH* 1.291–306; 6.468–91; 10.125–37, 147–66). In such descriptions Quintus seems to be following Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus. His primary narrator takes the reader away from the heroic time and brings him in the present. He himself is a witness to the *thaumasion* he describes and wants to animate him to visit the location, thus acting with his report as a *periegetes*.

Laments play an important role both in the *Iliad* and in the *Posthomerica*. Quintus makes a broader use of laments in his epic. In comparison with the *Iliad* we find in Quintus more laments spoken by men (e.g., 3.427–58: Ajax for Achilles; 3.460–90: Phoenix for Achilles; 3.491–503: Agamemnon for Achilles; Teucros for Ajax; 5.500–20).<sup>49</sup> In Briseis' lament for Achilles Quintus invites his reader to make a comparison with the lament expressed by the same woman for the death of Patroclus in the book 19 of the *Iliad*. This comparison along with other Homeric intertextual references (e.g., the *homilia* between Hector and Andromache in the sixth book of the *Iliad*) reveals both the novelty of

48 Cf. *PH* 9.414–22 and 499–508.

49 In the *Iliad* we find Achilles' lament for Patroclus in 19. 315–37 and Priam's for Hector in 22. 416–28.

Briseis' motives and a new aspect of Achilles, that of the tender and protective partner.<sup>50</sup>

## 9 Conclusion

Having briefly examined the main Homeric elements in Quintus' epic, I tried to present the poet of the *Posthomerica* as Homer's great *zelotes* verifying thus the laudatory remark by Constantinos Lascaris. Quintus mainly alludes to Homeric texts – much more to the *Iliad* than to the *Odyssey* – sometimes easily recognizable, sometimes subtle in order to create analogies between his characters and situations and those of the Homeric epics. This is not to be regarded as a lack of ideas, which affects the poetic creative power of our poet. It can be primarily explained by the poet's pursuit to remain close to the Homeric characters and circumstances. It is not seldom that we recognize Quintus' attempt to surpass his model, or to put his characters in a new light but without causing inconsistencies and incongruities with Homer. Quintus aims through the indirect characterization of his figures mainly against Homer's background at pointing out via the memory of the model and its common interpretation the intended understanding and appreciation. As Maciver<sup>51</sup> points out, the *Posthomerica* is a text which demands an integral reading of the Homeric texts for a full appreciation of the complexities of characterisation, and the subtleties of meaning. It is against the background of these passages that we recognize what is new and authentic in Quintus: an expressly deliberate poetic technique. The text, framework, and poetic apparatus of *Posthomerica* is certainly closely Homeric, but at the same time with its post-homeric art of composition, structures, philosophy, ethics and ideas it becomes un-Homeric, striving to update Homer and to conciliate the Homeric epics with the contemporary influences of its time of composition. This is another important tool for the determination of the target audience. Quintus wrote his epic about the last heroic attempts to save the city Ilion foremost for literary educated and interested members of the Greek upper class who were familiar with Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius Rhodius, and classical tragedies. These readers who wanted to preserve their Greek identity could not only understand the text, but also study it and realize the poet's creative power in the structure of the individual books and the whole epic. They could also recognize the allusions of certain parts of earlier poems and the art of their modification, thus deepening the pleasure of reading.

<sup>50</sup> See Tsomis (2007) 187–194.

<sup>51</sup> Maciver (2012b) 625.

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# Homeric Nonnus

*Gianfranco Agosti and Enrico Magnelli*

## 1 The Last Great Epic Poem(s)

Nonnus of Panopolis (modern Akhmim, in Upper Egypt) was not the last great poet of Antiquity writing in Greek: anyone who may hold such an opinion will have to pay his apologies to Paul the Silentiary and Romanos the Melodist, or even to George of Pisidia.<sup>1</sup> But he was the last one who enjoyed great, long-lasting success as an epic poet: his followers are better known to us as authors of epyllia, epigrams, and ecphrastic poetry, while their longer narrative poems – such as Colluthus' *Persika*, Christodorus' *Isaurika*, or Agathias' nine-books *Daphniaka* – have not resisted the outrages of time.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, Nonnus' monumental *Dionysiaca* in forty-eight books, one of the greatest literary achievements of Late Antiquity, managed to survive during the Middle Ages and was widely admired and imitated from the second half of the fifth century CE<sup>3</sup> down to the end of the Byzantine age – and also in modern times, from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>4</sup> Nor was his hexameter paraphrase of St John's Gospel forgotten – not an 'epic' poem *stricto sensu*, yet sometimes adding a truly epic flavour to the narration of Jesus' deeds (on this point, see below). Nonnus was well aware – and deservedly proud – of his originality: his poetic exuberance, his innovative style, his refashioning of the hexameter<sup>5</sup> really marked a renaissance, even a revolution, in Greek poetry. He felt like a

1 First decades of the seventh century: the first great Byzantine poet, and, in a certain sense, the last Late Antique one as well: see Agosti (2019) 116–118, with further discussion.

2 For a recent assessment on Greek hexameter poetry in the fifth and sixth centuries, see Agosti (2012) 368–370 and Whitby and Roberts (2018) 222–227.

3 Both the *Dionysiaca* and the *Paraphrasis of St John's Gospel* were probably composed in the central decades of the fifth century. On Nonnus' chronology and his (very uncertain) biography, see Livrea (2000) 39–76; Cameron (2000); Livrea (2003); Gigli Piccardi (2003) 33–60; Accorinti (2013) 1107–1113, and (2016a) 23–37; Hernández de la Fuente (2018) 355–361. For an updated bibliography on Nonnus see OBO s.v. *Nonnus* (G. Agosti).

4 See Tissoni (1998) 56–62; Gonnelli (2003) 26–40; Hernández de la Fuente (2006) and (2007); Agosti (2012) 382–384; Accorinti (2013) 1127; Hernández de la Fuente (2016).

5 There is no need to illustrate such features here: for an overall picture, with up-to-date bibliography, see Agosti (2012) 367 and 376–378; Accorinti (2013) 1116–1118. On Nonnus' hexameter see Magnelli (2016).

‘new Homer’ – and to some extent he was. We shall see how complex his attitude towards Homeric poetry was, and how fruitful it proved in shaping his own poetics.

1.1 “Tell Me, Goddess – in Different Words”

Εἰπέ, θεά, Κρονίδαο διάκτορον αἶθοπος εὐνῆς,  
νυμφιδίῳ σπινθήρι μογροστόκον ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ

Tell, Goddess, of the minister of Zeus’ flashing marriage-bed, the breath of thunderbolt, bringing the pangs of travail with a bridal spark (Nonn. *D.* 1.1–2).<sup>6</sup>

The first line of the *Dionysiaca* is, at first sight, quite Homeric; at a closer look, it proves to be less Homeric than one might think. The most remarkable Imperial poems dealing with the Trojan saga, i.e., Quintus of Smyrna’s *Posthomerica* and Triphiodorus’ *Sack of Troy*, both lack the traditional invocation to the Muse(s) at the very beginning: Triphiodorus postpones it to lines 3–5 (ed. Livrea)<sup>7</sup> and Quintus omits it wholly (he never asks for the Muses’ help except in the autobiographical passage of 12.306–13: ed. Vian).<sup>8</sup> The same applies to other kinds of hexameter poetry. In the 2nd century CE, the elegant Dionysius Periegetes begins his geographical poem under the sign of Apollonius, but in adapting ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοῖβε etc. (*Argonautica* 1.1: ed. Vian and Delage),<sup>9</sup> he totally deletes Apollo: and the Muses, whom Apollonius mentions in line 22, first appear in Dionysius after some sixty lines (ll. 62–3, ed. Lightfoot: later in 447, 651, 715–7).<sup>10</sup> Oppian of Anazarbos introduces Marcus Aurelius, his dedicatee,

6 Vian (1975) 196 = (2005b) 379–380 definitely restored εὐνῆς against the trivializing αὐγῆς preferred by most editors before Keydell. For the *Dionysiaca*, we normally refer to the Budé edition, i.e., Vian & al. (1976–2006); for the *Paraphrasis of St John’s Gospel*, to recent editions of single books where available – i.e., De Stefani (2002) for book 1, Livrea (2000) for 2, Caprara (2005) for 4, Agosti (2003) for 5, Franchi (2013) for 6, Spanoudakis (2014a) for 11, Greco (2004) for 13, Livrea (1989) for 18, Accorinti (1996) for 20 –, otherwise to Scheindler (1881); textual problems will be discussed if necessary. Translations are ours.

7 See Gerlaud (1982) 103–104; Miguélez Caverio (2013a) 132–134.

8 See Vian (1963–69) I.IX–XIII; Hopkinson (1994a) 105–106; Bär (2009) 72–78; Maciver (2012) 27–38; on the absence of the Muse in Quintus’ proem, also Bouvier (2005); Tsomis, in this volume, 90. Vian (1991) 5 = (2005b) 469 aptly highlights the difference between Quintus, who never mentions Homer, and Nonnus.

9 Cf. Vox (2002) 154–159; Hunter (2004) 218 = (2008) 718; Ilyushechkina (2010) 123; Lightfoot (2014) 261, quoting further bibliography.

10 On these passages, see Lightfoot (2014) 92.

in the third line of the *Halieutica*, confining the appeal to the Muse at the end of his long proem; furthermore, the goddess will be in some way subordinate to Oppian's human patron, her main task being to make the poem pleasing to the emperor and his son (*Halieutica* 1.77–9: ed. Fajen). Only in the proem of ps.-Oppian's *Cynegetica* does a goddess play an important, poetological role (1.18–42: ed. Papathomopoulos): but she is Artemis, not Calliope (just a brief mention of the latter at l. 17), and the passage has a distinctly Callimachean flavor that does not make the reader think of early epic.<sup>11</sup> With his “Tell me, Goddess” in the very first line, Nonnus might seem the most traditional of all.

In fact, he is not so traditional. The invocation appears to recall the beginning of the *Iliad* (μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος / οὐλομένην) and that of the *Odyssey* (ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλά / πλάγχθη),<sup>12</sup> but differs from both in verbal structure, vocabulary, and meaning. Besides avoiding enjambment (a device he is not very fond of), Nonnus takes care not to imitate his models too slavishly in either the verb or the vocative. The Muse is θεά as in the *Iliad*, yet in a different metrical *sedes*; instead of ‘singing’ (ἄειδε), she is requested to ‘tell’, as in the *Odyssey*, but ἔννεπε becomes εἰπέ. The combination of θεά and εἰπέ is Homeric indeed: it occurs at the end of the proem of the *Odyssey* (1.10), but with a different phrasing: τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν. To find εἰπέ, θεά at the beginning of a hexameter, we must rather turn to either Callimachus (*Hymn to Artemis* 186, ed. Pfeiffer: εἰπέ, θεή, σὺ μὲν ἄμμιν, ἐγὼ δ’ ἐτέροισιν αἰείσω)<sup>13</sup> or Theocritus (22.116, ed. Gow: εἰπέ, θεά, σὺ γὰρ οἶσθα· ἐγὼ δ’ ἐτέρων ὑποφήτης, etc.) neither of whom uses it in a proemial section.<sup>14</sup> Had we found this somewhere else in the lengthy *Dionysiaca*, we might even read it as nothing else than a learned mix of echoes and allusions: in the proem, it cannot but have a poetological meaning. Nonnus, in other words, is reworking his Homer in the light of Alexandrian poetry.

The very first word of each poem also matters, as both the Odyssean exceptional ‘man’ (ἄνδρα) and the Iliadic ‘anger’ (μῆνιν)<sup>15</sup> show. There is no initial name in Nonnus, whose vast and various *Dionysiaca* cannot be reduced to

11 See Costanza (1991); Bartley (2003) 170–178; De Stefani & Magnelli (2011) 552.

12 As many a scholar has noted: see, e.g., Kost (1971) 122–123; Vian (1976) 7; Shorrock (2001) 117.

13 “Addressed, creatively, not to the Muse but to the honorand, Artemis, herself”, as Sens (1997) 155 aptly remarks.

14 Vian (1976) 7: “avec une intention évidente, Nonnos évite une allusion trop précise à Homère et préfère emprunter une expression dont Callimaque et Théocrite ont usé à l’intérieur – et non pas au début – de deux de leurs œuvres”. Cf. Bannert (2008) 58 n. 19; Bannert and Kröll (2016) 493–495.

15 Cf. Lucilius *AP* 11.279 = 111 Floridi; Palladas *AP* 9.168.2, 9.173–74; Sens (2011) 183–184; Floridi (2006) 373–375 and (2014) 482–484.

one single theme: the first word is ‘tell me’, focusing on the poet’s narrative fertility – a partial list of its outcomes will appear at ll. 16–33. Some further remarks on the first line. (i) Κρονίδης is most usual in Homer (thirty-seven times in the *Iliad*, seven times in the *Odyssey*, often in the same metrical position), but never in the genitive Κρονίδαο.<sup>16</sup> (ii) Διάκτορος, much discussed in antiquity (see below), in Homer invariably refers to Hermes (eight times *Il.*, ten times *Od.*, most often in the formula διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης): a learned allusion to ancient erudition, and at the same time a marked difference with Homeric usage. (iii) In the Homeric poems αἶθοψ refers sometimes to χαλκός (eleven times), once to καπνός (*Od.* 10.152),<sup>17</sup> but very often to οἶνος (twenty-four times): here too Nonnus modifies the language of ancient epic, and not at random – the traditional epithet of wine perfectly fits the event that will give birth to Dionysus.<sup>18</sup> The so-called *presqu’ Homérique* is well known, especially to scholars of Hellenistic poetry, but here it conveys a literary programme: Nonnus declares his project to update Homeric themes and language in a very different kind of poetry. Line two exemplifies this principle effectively, setting the Homeric ‘jewel’ μογροστόκος<sup>19</sup> in the centre of the hexameter between the untraditional νυμφιδίῳ σπινθήρι and ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ, both consistent with Nonnus’ imaginative style.

In the first two lines of his great epic poem, Nonnus immediately makes clear that he will not behave like the notorious plagiarists, “stealing other people’s verses”, who, according to Pollianus (*AP* 11.130), contented themselves with repeating time and again μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, he will not systematically avoid Homeric language and patterns. He will rather exploit them in a very individual way, building his innovative poetry without any need to disregard its ancient foundations. The same holds true for Homeric narrative strategy, as we shall see in the next section.

16 The latter appears first in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 408: see Richardson (1974) 49. On a purely formal ground, our passage may owe something to the beginning of Antimachus’ *Thebaid*, fr. 1 Matthews ἐνέπετε, Κρονίδαο Διὸς μέγαλοιο θύγατρες (transmitted by Eustathius and the older scholia on *Il.* 1.1, and possibly known to Nonnus from some work of Homeric exegesis). At any rate, Κρονίδαο ending at the feminine caesura becomes very frequent in the *Dionysiaca* (twenty-five times).

17 Cf. Euripides *Bacchae* 594 (ed. Diggle) ἄπτε κεράυνιον αἶθοπα λαμπάδα. One may wonder whether Nonnus had in mind this passage as well.

18 Cf. the statue of the god crowned αἶθοπι κισσῶ in Proclus *epigr.* 2.3 Vogt.

19 Thrice in the *Iliad*, twice in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. On its disputed meaning and Nonnus’ playing with it, see below.

20 On the epigram, see Cameron (1995) 396–399; Lightfoot (1999) 84 and 187; Nisbet (2003) 188–193.

## 1.2 *Do Not Tie Down the Protean Poet*

Other programmatic statements in the proem to Book 1 deserve our attention. Lines 11–15 are also important in defining Nonnus' poetical agenda:

ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα, τινάξατε κύμβαλα, Μοῦσαι,  
καὶ παλάμη δότε θύρσον ἀειδομένου Διονύσου.  
ἀλλὰ χοροῦ ψαύοντα Φάρω παρὰ γείτονι νήσῳ  
στήσατέ μοι Πρωτῆα πολύτροπον, ὄφρα φανείῃ  
ποικίλον εἶδος ἔχων, ὅτι ποικίλον ὕμνον ἀράσσω.

Bring me the fennel, Muses, shake your cymbals, and put in my hand the wand of Dionysus, whom I celebrate. And evoke for me even shifty Proteus, who joins your dance in the neighbouring island of Pharos: let him appear in his variety of shapes, for various is the hymn I am going to sing.

These Muses are not the traditional Homeric ones: they are rather behaving like Maenads, and in their dance they are in the company<sup>21</sup> of Proteus, whose shifting nature Nonnus explicitly wishes to see in action. Scholars have not overlooked the relevance of Odysseus' epithet πολύτροπος referring here to the sea-god: "in an epic proem πολύτροπον inevitably alludes to the opening line of the *Odyssey*".<sup>22</sup> Proteus himself had his first appearance in Greek literature in the *Odyssey*, when Menelaus and his comrades overcome him in spite of all his transformations and force him to reveal the truth about their homeward journey (*Od.* 4.351–570). In Nonnus, Proteus migrates from this minor if suggestive episode to the very proem, appropriating Odysseus' title and relevance – note that Homeric exegesis had long established a link between πολυτροπία and ποικιλία.<sup>23</sup> Change and variety (ποικίλον εἶδος) are no longer an obstacle: they rather become a value, a basic feature of Nonnian poetics.<sup>24</sup> At ll. 16–33 the poet illustrates how fruitful his cooperation with the sea-god is going to be: if he turns into a snake, I will sing of Dionysus destroying snake-haired Giants; if he becomes a wild boar, I will celebrate his love for boar-slaying Aura, mother

21 Gigli Piccardi (1993) and (2003) 120–121 is probably right in preferring the transmitted ψαύοντα to Koechly's ψαύοντι (accepted by both Keydell and Vian): it is Proteus, not the poet, whose participation in the Muses' chorus deserves emphasis.

22 Hopkinson (1994b) 10.

23 See Agosti (1997) 33–34.

24 Cf. Fauth (1981); Gonzalez-Senmarti (1981); Gigli Piccardi (1985) 150–154; Agosti (1997) 34–38; Giraudet (2005); Bannert (2008) 59–60; most recently, Paschalis (2014).

of Iacchos, and so on. Nonnus' Protean ποικιλία will affect both themes and, consequently, style.

In the light of this, we can re-read the second passage on Proteus and Homer near the end of the prologue (ll. 34–8):

ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα, Μιμαλλόνες, ὠμαδίην δὲ  
νεβρίδα ποικιλόνωτον ἐθήμονος ἀντὶ χιτῶνος  
σφίγξατέ μοι στέρνοισι, Μαρωνίδος ἔμπλεον ὀσμῆς  
νεκταρέης, βυθίῃ δὲ παρ' Εἰδοθέῃ καὶ Ὀμήρῳ  
φωκάων βαρὺ δέρμα φυλασσέσθω Μενελάῳ.

Bring me the fennel, Mimallons, and instead of the usual tunic, bind over my breast a variegated fawnskin, redolent of the perfume of Maronian nectar: and let Homer and abyssal Eidothea keep the stinking sealskin for Menelaus.

Now the Bacchic transformation of the goddesses is complete (l. 34: it is probably irrelevant to wonder whether these Μιμαλλόνες<sup>25</sup> are Muses turned into Maenads or Maenads replacing the Muses).<sup>26</sup> But the interpretation of the 'stinking sealskin' is less straightforward. It is tempting to read these lines as a pun against Homer, a manifesto of Callimachean 'integralism' such as the one that Erycius (*AP* 7.377 = *GPh* 2274–81) ascribes to Parthenius of Nicaea.<sup>27</sup> Does Nonnus, whose bent for Callimachus (and Euphoriion, and other refined Hellenistic authors) scholars know only too well,<sup>28</sup> mean that Homeric poetry is unbearable and rancid?<sup>29</sup> We do not think that his words must be taken at

25 Traditional name of the Macedonian Maenads, soon to become just a synonym for Βάκχαι: see Pfeiffer (1949–53) 1.371; Kalléris (1954) 210–215; Vian (1976) 135–136. On Nonnus' terminology, cf. also Vian (2005a).

26 "Si c'est aux Muses que le poète réclame la férule, les cymbales et le thyrsos aux v. 11–12, celles-ci font place ou plutôt s'identifient aux Mimallones dans l'invocation suivante": thus Vian (1976) 9–10.

27 Who, according to the malignant epigrammatist, dared "to call the *Odyssey* mud and the *Iliad* filth". Erycius may well have exaggerated: see Lightfoot (1999) 76–80; De Stefani & Magnelli (2011) 542–543.

28 See, e.g., Hollis (1976) and (1994); Magnelli (2002) 117–122; De Stefani & Magnelli (2011) 557–561; Mazza (2012), whose excellent dissertation would deserve to become a monograph; Acosta-Hughes (2016) and (2020); Massimilla (2016); Cresci (2018); Magnolo (2020).

29 Such is the opinion of a very competent Nonniann scholar: Miguélez Caverio (2008) 130 and 154. Some objections in Magnelli (2014b) 294. Hopkinson (1994b) 10 also remarked that "the noisome Homeric sealskin is a collateral descendant of Callimachus' long-distance

face value. Elsewhere he calls Homer “the one great harbour of poetic eloquence” (*Dionysiaca* 13.51) and “fulgid, immortal herald of Greece” (25.253: on both passages, see below): this led Vian to see a good deal of irony in the apparent refusal at 1.37–8.<sup>30</sup> Yet we are tempted to read more in this passage. If Proteus has a marked, undeniable poetological meaning, it is likely that the sealskin in turn embodies another, opposite literary value: something that goes *against* Proteus, and that the Protean poet despises for this very reason. What Nonnus does in fact refuse is not Homer, but Homeric self-restraint. In a famous passage of *Poetics* (23, 1459a30–b7: ed. Tarán and Gutas), Aristotle had praised Homer’s selective narrative strategy “for not having attempted to make a poem about the entire war”, since it would have been “too bulky and without unity, or, if moderate in size, too intricately detailed” (καταπεπλεγμένον τῇ ποικιλίᾳ). The Panopolitan poet will do exactly the opposite: his Bacchic epic covers the entire story of Dionysus’ life, deeds, and ascension to Olympus, thus proving *both* bulky *and* intricately detailed. No constraint for him: no Menelaus hidden under a disagreeable covering will clip wings to his poetic exuberance. Add that, as Hopkinson acutely remarked, the “Maronian nectar” of line 36 is itself Odyssean: “Proteus imitated yet challenged, and the contrast between the fawnskin redolent of famous Homeric wine and the equally Homeric but offensive sealskin, draw attention to the status of Homer as both ally and rival, inspiration and threat, to Nonnian epic”.<sup>31</sup>

Nonnus writes under the sign of Proteus and is not going to tie him down. With his rich stock of Dionysiac tales, he will confront the sea-god and match any transformation of his by means of his polymorphic talent.<sup>32</sup>

As for the length, Nonnus’ 48 books aim at looking like a sum of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (by contrast, the *Paraphrase* probably had no book division: sometimes a ‘new’ book begins at the middle of a line). But the structure of the poem is ‘Homeric’ only at a very general level. While Nonnus embeds into his narrative a long ‘Iliadic’ part, the *Indiad* (books 13–40: actually more than 24

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cranes, braying asses, bloated woman, and filthy river”, but within the frame of a more nuanced interpretation (see below).

30 Vian (1991) 6 = (2005b) 470–471.

31 Hopkinson (1994b) 11 with n. 25; see also Cadau (2015) 51 n. 56. On Maron, an Ismarian priest of Apollo at *Od.* 9.196–211, then becoming a descendant of Dionysus (‘Hesiod’ fr. 238 Merkelbach-West) or even a son of his (Euripides *Cyclops* 141: ed. Diggle), see Vian (1976) 136; Seaford (1984) 128; Hunter & Lämmle (2020) 127; on his character in Nonnus, also Chrétien (1985) 77–78.

32 As Shorrock (2001) 21–2 rightly suggests, this “also serves [...] to teach readers an early and important lesson about how they should engage with the polytropic narrative of the *Dionysiaca*: as the poet follows his neighbour through his multiple transformations, so the reader must follow Nonnus through the twists and turns of his narrative”.



books!),<sup>33</sup> the 'Odyssean' one is much shorter (books 40–48, on Dionysus' last peregrinations). Once again, even within such a frame, Nonnus is less Homeric than one could expect: the *Indiad*, as Vian pointed out, is rather modelled on the narrative structure of the *Cypria*, reflecting every phase of the Trojan war<sup>34</sup> – according to Nonnus' anxiety to fill every gap in the story.

The 'cornerstone' (Vian) of the poem, book 25, has a long second prologue, divided into two sections (ll. 1–30 and 253–70) by a long *synkrisis* between Dionysus and three other Zeus' sons by mortal women, Perseus, Minos, and Heracles, in order to demonstrate the former's superiority. This proem is the occasion for the poet to come back on his relation with Homer, and to proudly claim the novelty of his poetry.<sup>35</sup> After declaring at the beginning that he will follow Homer, singing only the last year of the war – the seventh, not the tenth: but the previous ones he did in fact narrate in books 14–24 – Nonnus does not renounce to claim that the Indian war is greater than the Trojan one (25.1–10, 27–30). Later he seems to change his mind, invoking Homer's help (ll. 253–60):

παμφαῆς υἱὲ Μέλητος, Ἀχαιίδος ἄφθιτε κήρυξ,  
 ἰλήκοι σέο βίβλος ὁμόχρονος ἡριγενείῃ·  
 Τρωάδος ὑσμίνης οὐ μνήσομαι· οὐ γὰρ εἶσκω  
 Αἰακίδῃ Διόνυσον ἢ Ἑκτορι Δηριαδῇα.  
 ὑμνήσειν μὲν ὄφελλε τόσον καὶ τοῖον ἀγῶνα  
 Μοῦσα τεῇ καὶ Βάκχον ἀκοντιστήρα Γιγάντων,  
 ἄλλοις δ' ὑμνοπόλοισι πόνους Ἀχιλῆος ἑάσσαι,  
 εἰ μὴ τοῦτο Θέτις γέρας ἤρπασεν.

O fulgid son of Meles, eternal herald<sup>36</sup> of Greece, may your book,<sup>37</sup> ancient as the Dawn, be propitious to me! I will not speak of the Trojan war: for I am not going to compare Dionysus to the son of Aeacus, or Deriades to Hector. Your Muse ought to have sung so great and high a war, and Bacchus striking the Giants, leaving Achilles' labours to other poets, had not Thetis deprived you of such an honour.

33 See Vian (1976) xxii–xxiv; Vian (1994); Shorrock (2001) 67–69; Gigli Piccardi (2003) 27–30; Chuvin (2006) 249–268; Hernández de la Fuente (2008) 209–226; Miguélez Cavero (2008) 19–21 and 167–180.

34 Vian (1991) 7–8 = (2005b) 471–472.

35 See Bannert and Kröll (2016) 495–498. On the concept of novelty in Nonnus see Agosti (2009) 102–107, and now Miguélez Cavero (2013b).

36 A traditional metaphor: see Nünlist (1998) 68–80.

37 On this bookish imagery of Homer see Agosti (2010); cf. also Lightfoot (2020).

Dionysus as an epic hero would have better suited the genius of Homer, had not Thetis 'stolen' from him such a privilege. It might seem that Nonnus honestly admits his own inferiority to the father of epic poetry, and he actually continues asking for Homer's help two lines below (261–2 ὑμετέρης γὰρ / δεύομαι εὐεπίης, "I need your poetic eloquence" just like in the catalogue of Bacchic troops he had defined Homer εὐεπίης ὄλον<sup>38</sup> ὄρμον, "the harbour of every poetic eloquence", 13.51). But is this really the case? Nonnus invokes Homer's assistance exactly after having brought down the value of the *Iliad*, perfidiously remarking that Dionysus and not Achilles was a better subject for his poetry. If Homer had better to compose a *Dionysiad*, as a matter of fact the poet who had the chance to achieve such a poem is necessarily superior to him. Denying what he is proudly affirming, Nonnus accomplishes the utterance of 25.26–7: ἀλλὰ νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων, etc "in competition with both new and old poets".<sup>39</sup>

## 2 Reworking Homeric Themes

In the *Dionysiaca*, Nonnus seldom resists the temptation of exploiting Homeric themes and reworking entire scenes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The careful analysis of modern scholars – above all Vian, Hopkinson, Shorrock, and Chuvin<sup>40</sup> – has deservedly highlighted the great originality of Nonnus' approach. The Διὸς ἀπάτη (*Il.* 14.153–360, 15.1–77) is rewritten in a more complex and rhetorically elaborate fashion at *Dionysiaca* 31.4–32.97.<sup>41</sup> At *Dionysiaca* 23.162–24.67 Dionysus fights against the Hydaspes far better than Achilles did against the Scamander (*Il.* 21.136–382), and he needs no Hephaestus to help him.<sup>42</sup> The Homeric theomachy of *Il.* 20.56–74 and 21.383–520 becomes in Nonnus – in the footsteps, as Vian noted, of Heraclitus' *Homeric Questions* (52–8: ed. Buffière) and similar texts – a cosmic allegory (*Dionysiaca* 36.1–133);<sup>43</sup> and Dionysus'

38 Cf. De Stefani (1999) 336–338, who would emend into λάλον.

39 See Hopkinson (1994b) 12–13; Agosti (2013) 100–101.

40 Vian (1991); Hopkinson (1994b); Shorrock (2001); Chuvin (2006). Many other passages of this kind are discussed in the modern commented editions (both the Budé and the Italian one) of the *Dionysiac* poem; on *Dionysiaca* 44–46 cf. also Tissoni (1998).

41 Hopkinson (1994b) 29–30, defining it "a dark counterpart of the Homeric scene"; Vian (1997) 40–59 and 75–82; Sánchez Ortiz de Landaluce (2009); De Stefani (2011a) 68–69; Agosti (2013) 379–385.

42 See Hopkinson (1994b) 29–30.

43 Cf. Vian (1991) 12 = (2005b) 476–477, and the more detailed analysis in Vian (1988); cp. also Hopkinson (1994b) 24–25; Agosti (2013) 611–616. On ancient allegorical readings of Homer's theomachy, see Pontani (2005) 219–221, with further bibliography.

shield (*Dionysiaca* 25.380–567) reworks Achilles' (*Il.* 18.478–608) adding to it an allegorical, poetological, even soteriological meaning.<sup>44</sup> The funeral games for Opheltes in *Dionysiaca* 37 are very similar to those for Patroclus in *Il.* 23: as Hopkinson acutely noted, Nonnus "has made his closest and most direct attempt at Homeric emulation in an episode that is concerned more than any other with competitiveness".<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, the brief mention of Lycurgus' rage against Dionysus at *Il.* 6.130–40 is expanded into a detailed narration of almost five hundred lines (*Dionysiaca* 20.149–21.169), where "variant traditions and local legends are used to supplement Homer".<sup>46</sup> Many other instances could be added. Sometimes, epic themes and scenes are reworked with a good deal of irony;<sup>47</sup> Nonnus even turns to parodical distortion, as in *D.* 1.507–09 (ἔννεπε· καὶ χαροπήσιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεύσε Τυφωεύς, etc.), depicting Typhon as a ludicrous parody of Zeus.<sup>48</sup>

Abundance and multiplicity are constitutive elements of Nonnus' Dionysiac epic: it is therefore unsurprising that Homeric imitation occasionally – yet intentionally – results in exaggeration and diffraction. At *Il.* 4.85–147 the arrow that Pandarus shoots at Meleus is diverted by Athena. At *Dionysiaca* 29.49–86 an Indian warrior shoots at Dionysus, but Zeus diverts the arrow to Hymenaeus, then Aphrodite and Dionysus himself reduce its effect, saving the beautiful youth: Nonnus, as scholars have remarked,<sup>49</sup> multiplies the narrative elements, introducing two targets for the arrow and no less than three gods (wasn't one enough?) against it. Another eloquent example is offered by the multiple *aristeiai* in book 22 of the *Dionysiaca*.<sup>50</sup> While Homeric *aristeiai* usually centre on the deeds of one single hero at a time, in *D.* 22 we find four heroes engaged in two short *aristeiai* (Dionysus and Erechtheus) and two lengthy ones (Oeagrus and Aeacus). First comes Dionysus, easily scattering the whole Indian army: but he is granted no more than nine lines (159–67), lest his divine power should

44 See Vian (1991) 10–12 = (2005b) 474–476; Hopkinson (1994b) 22–24; Agnosini (2010); Spanoudakis (2014b).

45 Hopkinson (1994b) 31. Cf. Frangoulis' (1995) and (1999) 3–74 detailed analysis; Agosti (2013) 669–675.

46 Hopkinson (1994b) 26. Cf. Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 8–19; Gonnelli (2003) 411–415.

47 Aptly investigated by both De Stefani (2011a) and Frangoulis (2011). For another instance of parodical rewriting of a Homeric episode see *Dionysiaca* 29.323–81, reversing the Homeric 'epyllion' of Ares and Aphrodite – not that this may support the old theory of the *Dionysiaca* as a series of epyllic units: see Agosti (2016).

48 Vian (1976) 64 n. 2; Gigli Piccardi (2003) 179; De Stefani (2011a) 71–72.

49 Vian (1990) 205–206 and (1991) 15–17 = (2005b) 480–481; De Stefani (2011a) 67; Agosti (2013) 296–297.

50 For a more detailed analysis, see Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 75–92; also Schmiel (2003) 471–473, and Gonnelli (2003) 496–497.

win the battle too quickly and leave no room for the heroism of his accolytes. Then eighty-four lines (168–217+320–53)<sup>51</sup> are devoted to Oeagrus, husband of the Muse Calliope and father of Orpheus, who slays an endless multitude of Indians

ἔῃς ἀλόχοιο τελέσσας  
ἔργα φατιζομένης ἐπιδευέα Καλλιοπείης

doing deeds that needed his wife, the famous Calliope, <to narrate them> (189–90).

The second detailed *aristeia* is that of Aeacus, Achilles' grandfather: seventy-six lines (253–92 and 354–89: but something more on him at the beginning of book 23) interrupted by a much briefer passage on Erechtheus (293–319). He massacres “not one Lycaon alone” (οὐχ ἓνα μῶνον ... Λυκάονα, 380), and the river Hydaspes “received many a dead Asteropaeus” (καὶ πολλὸν Ἀστεροπαῖον ἐδέξατο νεκρὸν Ὑδάσπης, 383): Aeacus' deeds are compared to those of Achilles in *Il.* 21 (Lycaon, *Il.* 34–135; Asteropaeus, *Il.* 139–204), but appear to be even more prodigious. The comparison is made explicit at *Il.* 384–89:

οὐδ' ἄθεεὶ πολέμιζε καὶ Αἰακός· ἀντιβίους γάρ,  
ὥς γενέτης Πηλῆος, ἔσω ποταμοῖο δαΐζων  
ἱκμαλέον μόθον εἶχε καὶ ὕδατόεσσαν ἐνυώ,  
οἶα προθεσπίζων ποταμοῦ παρὰ χεῦμα Καμάνδρου  
φύλοπιν ἡμιτέλεστον ἐπεσσομένην Ἀχιλῆϊ·  
καὶ μόθον υἱωνοῖο μόθος μαντεύσατο πάππου.<sup>52</sup>

Not without divine inspiration Aeacus also fought: the father of Peleus, he slew the enemies in the river, a liquid battle, a watery war, as if to foretell Achilles' unfinished battle near the stream of Scamander in the future. The grandfather's fight prophesied that of his grandson.

If Aeacus' *aristeia* competes with that of Oeagrus, Nonnus also competes with Homer in a twofold way: on one side, Aeacus performing greater acts of heroism than his (more famous) grandson; on the other hand, the poetic

51 The transposition of lines 320–53 between 217 and 218 seems unavoidable: see Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 283–285; Gonnelli (2003) 519–521.

52 There is no reason to suspect these six lines, as Keydell (1927) 405 = (1982) 455 once did: see Vian (1976) xxxvi n. 3; Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 245; Shorrock (2001) 165 n. 190.

voice regretting that Oeagrus' bravery did not receive the epic celebration it deserved – at least, not in ancient times: but now, Nonnus seems to suggest, the valiant hero has eventually found his Homer. By the way, the two heroes' style of fighting is not quite Homeric. Aeacus massacres his enemies with spear, sword, and stones<sup>53</sup> at the same time (264–5); Oeagrus first uses spear and sword together (191–204), then turns to bow and arrows (320 ff.), and we also find out, to our surprise,<sup>54</sup> that he does so “mounted on his high-crested horse” (212). Rather than the Iliadic warriors, Nonnus probably had in mind the heavily armored cavalry (cataphracts or *clibanarii*) of his time.<sup>55</sup> At any rate, his fondness for superabundance strikes again.

In the *Paraphrase*, due to the limits imposed by genre, detailed reworking of Homeric scenes is less frequent.<sup>56</sup> According to the main principles of Christian literary imitation, *Usurpation* and *Kontrastimitation*,<sup>57</sup> Nonnus rather alludes to Homeric scenes reversing the original context in order to point out the superiority of his Christian narrative – and eventually of himself as a poet. A good example of such a technique is *Paraphrase* 12.160–62, corresponding to John 6.40, where the Evangelist quotes a passage from Isaiah (6.10). Nonnus expands Isaiah's simple phrase καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς in two lines and a half:

νοοβλαβέας δὲ σαώσω  
 ἄνδρας ἀλιτράινοντας ἐμῷ παιήονι μύθῳ  
 ἱητὴρ ἀσίδηρος ἐχέφρονα φάρμακα πάσσω.

I will save evil-minded sinners with my healing words, a doctor without  
 scalpel, spreading spiritual remedies.

φάρμακα πάσ(ειν) is a typical Iliadic phrase for healing somebody wounded in battle.<sup>58</sup> Like other Homeric tags perceived as ‘too Homeric’ (see below), it is

53 On Nonnus' interest in λιθοβολία as yet another way of reworking Homer, see Montenz (2002).

54 Cf. Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 85 n. 1; Gonnelli (2003) 497 and 514–515.

55 As Gonnelli (2003) 517 rightly notes: cf. 227 ἵπποι χαλκοχίτωνες. On the cataphracts cf. Speidel (1984); Brizzi (2008) 151–155 and 193–194, with further bibliography. Nonnus does not refrain from alluding to ‘modern’ techniques of war; cf. Chamberlayne (1916) 47; Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 77 n. 2; Kauffman (2016).

56 See also Spanoudakis (2014a) 8.

57 See Agosti (2011), with further bibliography.

58 It occurs in 4.218 (Macaon), 5.401 and 900 Παιήων ὀδυνήφατα φάρμακα πάσσω (Paieon healing Aphrodite and Ares), 11.515 and 830 ἥπια φάρμακα πάσσε(ιν) (Macaon and Patroclus), 15.393–4 (Patroclus healing Eurypylus).

rarely reused by later epic poets, and only once in a similar context.<sup>59</sup> Nonnus is an exception, since he uses the phrase four times in the *Dionysiaca*, twice for Aristaeus and Dionysus, both “spreading simples” on the wounds of the Bacchants,<sup>60</sup> once for Ares healing Eurymedon’s wounds, and only once in a metaphorical sense.<sup>61</sup> Against this little constellation of Homeric medicine, in the *Paraphrase* stands this one passage, where the ‘balsams’ are completely spiritualized (ἐχέφρονα). Nonnus underlines the contrast with traditional remedies, pointing out – through contrastive imitation not of a precise passage, but rather of a formula – that the ‘true physician’ is Christ, not the Homeric heroes or deities. And adding παῖθονι μύθῳ, a formula once related to Apollo, but later extended to other gods from the Hellenistic age onwards, and used for Dionysus in the *Dionysiaca*, he marks the contrast between Dionysus and Christ<sup>62</sup> and between his own ‘traditional’ poetic side and the new Christian poetry of the *Paraphrase*.

### 3 Formulaic Diction, Stylistic Renewal, and Homeric Glosses

If slavish imitators endlessly repeat αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα<sup>63</sup> (never in Nonnus), more gifted epic poets refrain from trite Homeric phrases, rather devoting themselves, in some cases, to the creation of a new semi-formulaic system of their own. This happens with Apollonius,<sup>64</sup> with Quintus of Smyrna,<sup>65</sup> and – on a much larger scale – with Nonnus. He in fact develops a highly original expressive tool, based on the synergy of repetition and variation: the well-known ‘flexibility’ of the Homeric formula is now raised to the third power. Some of these new ‘formulas’ venture into the properly Homeric field of lines introducing direct speech: Homer’s most usual καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα, never closely imitated, is replaced by a great variety of hemistichs like

59 Quintus Smyrnaeus *Posthomerica* 9.463 (ed. Vian). In Paul the Silentiary *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae* 224 (ed. De Stefani), it metaphorically refers to the harm caused to Constantinople by the collapse of Hagia Sophia’s dome.

60 *Dionysiaca* 17.357 (Aristaeus) and 29.265 (Dionysus).

61 Respectively 30.104 (φερέσβια φάρμακα πάσων) and 34.72 (φάρμακα ποικίλα πάσων, ‘balsams’ to be applied to the heart to cure the wound of love).

62 See Vian (1990) 340; Agnosini (2020) 282–283 n. 429. Synesius refers the epithet to God (*Hymn* 2.8–9, ed. Lacombrade: παιῶν ψυχᾶν / παιῶν γυῖων, “healer of souls, healer of bodies”).

63 Deservedly blamed by Pollianus (*AP* 11.130.1), quoted above.

64 As Fantuzzi (2008) has persuasively demonstrated.

65 See Vian (1959) 175–192; Cantilena (2001); Ferreccio (2014) XVIII–XXXIV; Tsomis, in this volume, 87–89.

κινυρήν βρυχήσατο φωνήν, δολοπλόκον ἔπλεκε φωνήν, χέων ἀνεμώδεα (or οἰκτίρ-  
μονα, μελιηδέα, λυσσώδεα, al.) φωνήν, etc.<sup>66</sup> Other recurrent phrases stem from  
Hellenistic poetry: the Callimachean clause νωθρός ὀδίτης (*Hecale* fr. 68 Hollis)  
is both re-used in three passages of *Dionysiaca* (3.101, 17.27, 43.381) and turned  
into κοῦφος ὀδίτης, πεζός ὁ., ὑγρός ὁ., νεκρός ὁ., and so on<sup>67</sup> – in the *Paraphrase*  
too, at times in a different sense.<sup>68</sup> As Hopkinson aptly remarks, Nonnus’  
para-formulaic diction, “with its spontaneous production of new compounds  
and its proliferating and endlessly varied lexical mutations, is the linguistic  
complement to the changefulness, superabundance, and exotic novelty of the  
new god whom it stridently proclaims”.<sup>69</sup> It is yet another way of being at the  
same time traditional and modern, ‘Homeric’ and original.

Sometimes Nonnus rewrites a single Homeric line in order to make it more  
suitable to his own stylistic or metrical standards. There is nothing unusual in  
this practice, familiar to both famous poets like Antimachus<sup>70</sup> and Late Antique  
schoolmasters like Focas and his interpolators – who amused themselves in  
reworking Vergil’s apocryphal epitaph for Ballista (fr. 1 Blänsdorf = 1 Courtney)  
in every possible fashion.<sup>71</sup> But Nonnus’ behaviour may be more refined.  
When he turns the Homeric φάσγανον/ἄορ/ξίφος ὅξυ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ  
(*Il.* 1.190; 21.173; *Od.* 9.300; 10.126, 294, 321, 535; 11.24, 48) into *Dionysiaca* 4.412  
θηγαλέην δὲ μάχαιραν ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ, he does not only avoid a disa-  
greeable hiatus, but also, in all likelihood, adds to the Homeric model a remi-  
niscence of Euphorion, θ]ηγαλέη αἰ δὲ δρεπ[άνη (*Supplementum Hellenisticum*  
414.15 = fr. 25.15 Lightfoot, more closely imitated at *Dionysiaca* 15.34 θηγαλέω  
δρεπάνω).<sup>72</sup> Another interesting case is *Dionysiaca* 22.201–2, on the death of a  
young Indian warrior:

66 Effectively discussed by Hopkinson (1994b) 15; for a complete list see Ludwich (1873) 57–58.

67 See Hollis (1976) 142–143 and (2009) 217; Gigli Piccardi (1980); Agosti (2003) 352, 409–410; Spanoudakis (2014a) 280.

68 For example, ὀψικέλευθος ὀδίτης in *Paraphrase* 5.55 means ‘late walking’ (i.e., ‘who began to walk late in his life’: the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda), whereas in *Dionysiaca* 37.378 the formula simply means ‘coming late’ (the same meaning the adjective has in *Par.* 11.60 ἔλθων ὀψικέλευθος).

69 Hopkinson (1994b) 14.

70 We learn from Porphyrius (fr. 409.35 Smith) that Antimachus, fond of spondaic hexameters, changed the second hemistich of *Il.* 9.558 Ἰδεώ θ’ ὃς κάρτιστος ἐπιχθονίων γένετ’ ἀνδρῶν into ἐπιχθονίων ἦν ἀνδρῶν (fr. 88 Matthews), and that Lycophron (fr. 12 Strecker = 16 Pellettieri) approved of the change “because it made the line more solemn” (ὥς δι’ αὐτῆς ἐστ<ηρ>ιγμένου τοῦ στίχου). See Pellettieri (2020) 330–336.

71 See Focas, *vita Vergilii* 49–59 Hardie = 73–83 Brugnoli-Stok, with Brugnoli (1984) 23–24 and Rincón González (1994).

72 On the hiatus, see Hopkinson (1994b) 17; on Nonnus and the Euphorionic passage, Magnelli (2002) 118.

ψυχὴ δ' ἡνεμόφοιτος ἀναΐξασα θανόντος  
 συμπλεκέος ποθέεσκεν ἐθήμονα σώματος ἥβην.

and the dead man's soul flew away with the wind, longing for the youth of the familiar body once bound up with it.

These two lines, as scholars have long noted,<sup>73</sup> are a paraphrase of *Il.* 16.856–57 = 22.362–63: ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων παταμένη Ἄιδόσδε βεβήκει, / ὃν πότμον γοώωσα, λιποῦσ' ἀνδροτῆτα καὶ ἥβην, “and his soul, fleeing from his limbs, was gone to Hades, lamenting its fate, leaving manliness and youth”. Nonnus rewrites them in perfectly ‘modern’ style – all three epithets, ἡνεμόφοιτος, συμπλεκής, and ἐθήμων, appear to be Nonnian coinages<sup>74</sup> – and replaces a most anomalous Homeric hexameter<sup>75</sup> with the very smooth line 202. Vergil had condensed the Homeric passage in just one line, *vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras* (*Aen.* 11.831 = 12.952: ed. Conte); Nonnus, instead of condensing (conciseness did not count exactly among his virtues), has both ‘updated’ and ‘corrected’ it.<sup>76</sup>

It has been noted that Nonnus is not very fond – far less than some Hellenistic poets – of controversial Homeric glosses, and rarely alludes to scholarly debates about them.<sup>77</sup> But his abstinence from such pleasures is not absolute. Hopkinson rightly observed that at *Dionysiaca* 24.256, describing Aphrodite's comic efforts at the loom as πόνος ἀγέλαστος (or οὐ ... ἀγ., with Livrea's emendation), Nonnus probably alludes to a textual problem in *Od.* 8.307, where the outcomes of the goddess' adultery are ἔργα γελαστά in the manuscripts and ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα according to the indirect tradition.<sup>78</sup> And his knowledge of Homeric scholarship was by no means confined to variant readings. Learned Alexandrian authors, above all Apollonius, delighted in exploiting the different possible meanings of a given Homeric word in different passages of their poems:<sup>79</sup>

73 Cf. Rouse (1911) 187 n. a; Hopkinson and Vian (1994) 238–239.

74 (a) ἡνεμόφοιτος: eight times in the *Dionysiaca*, *Paraphrase* 20.105; unattested outside Nonnus. See Accorinti (1996) 210. (b) συμπλεκής: eight times *D.*, *Par.* 6.38; unattested outside Nonnus. (c) ἐθήμων: thirty-nine times *Dionysiaca*, fourteen times *Paraphrase*; later in ‘Nonnian’ poets: Pamprepis(?) fr. 1r.30 Livrea, *Musae.* 312 (ed. Livrea and Eleuteri), *Encomium Heraclii GDRK* xxxiv 8. See Agosti (2003) 314.

75 On the puzzling prosody of ἀνδροτῆτα see Tichy (1981) 39–55; Janko (1992) 421.

76 Yet he sometimes does in fact condense the Homeric model, when the quotation of a phrase, or even just a word, from Homer conveys a new meaning by evoking the original context: examples from the *Paraphrase* in Spanoudakis (2014a) 7.

77 Hopkinson (1994b) 15–16; Miguélez Caverio (2008) 154.

78 See Hopkinson (1994b) 16; Livrea (1998) 34 = (2016) 176; Gonnelli (2003) 604.

79 Cf. Rengakos (1994), the pivotal work on this topic.



Nonnus sometimes appears to follow in their steps. Let us take into account his exploitation of *Il.* 6.135, where Lycurgus lays into Dionysus' nurses with a βουπλήξ, a weapon of unclear nature identified by ancient scholarship with either an axe, an ox-goad, or even a whip. Nonnus uses βουπλήξ quite often, in most cases with the meaning of 'axe' – the prevalent post-Homeric usage. Yet at *Dionysiaca* 21.101, turning the Homeric θεινόμεναι βουπλήγι into θεινόμεναι μάστργι, he alludes to the whip;<sup>80</sup> and in two further passages, *Dionysiaca* 21.19–21 and 34.249–55, he appears to have in mind the ox-goad.<sup>81</sup> No exegetical path has been left untrodden.

Even more interesting is the Nonnian use of μογοστόκος. The rare epithet first appears in the Homeric phrase μογοστόκος Εἰλείθυια (*Il.* 16.187, 19.103, *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 97, 115 (ed. West); -οι -αι *Il.* 11.270). Its basic meaning must have been "(goddess) of childbirth", yet the different contexts in which it appears led ancient grammarians to interpret it as either (a) "suffering hard travail" or, better, (b) "bringing the pangs of travail",<sup>82</sup> the latter more specifically implying (b1) "making women suffer", "painful", or (b2) "freeing women from pain".<sup>83</sup> Among the few occurrences of μογοστόκος between Homer and Nonnus, Lycophron 829–30 (ed. Hurst and Kolde) μογοστόκους ὠδῖνας seems to reflect (b1), the author of [Theocritus] 27.30 (ed. Gow) clearly had (b2) in mind,<sup>84</sup> while Triphiodorus 386 (ed. Livrea), on the Trojan horse as μογοστόκος ἵππος, means (a) at face value but subtly suggests (b1) alluding to the massacre that the horse's 'delivery' will cause.<sup>85</sup> Nonnus' usage is not consistent, nor was it intended to be. In some occurrences, the adjective has a very general meaning (cf. *Dionysiaca* 8.80, 9.7, 36.59 and 66, 41.133; *Paraphrase* 9.158). But in 27.276, εἰσόκε Δῆλος ἄμυνε μογοστόκος, the meaning is clearly "Delos who relieved her travail" (lines 270–77 are a *mise en abîme* of Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*<sup>86</sup>); meaning (b2) is also evident in 27.324 and 41.161. On the contrary, meaning (b1) is alluded to in both *Dionysiaca* 1.2 μογοστόκον ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ

80 Chuvin (1991) 256 n. 5.

81 For a more detailed analysis see Magnelli (2009).

82 *Synagoge* μ 245 Cunningham = Photius μ 496 Theodoridis = *Suda* μ 1182 Adler μογοστόκος· περὶ τοὺς τόκους κακοπαθοῦσα (cf. *schol.* T *Il.* 16.187a, iv p. 211 Erbse μογοῦσα περὶ τοὺς τόκους, Hesychius μ 1535 Latte-Cunningham μογοῦσα καὶ πονομένη περὶ τοὺς τοκετούς). ἔνιοι δὲ μόγους ταῖς τικτούσαις ἐπιφέρουσιν.

83 *Schol.* bT *Il.* 11.271, iii p. 176 Erbse πικράς ὠδῖνας ἔχουσαι] ἀμφίβολον· ἡ γὰρ ἐπιμελείας ἀξιοῦσαι [...] ἢ ἐπέχουσαι τὰς πικράς ὠδῖνας καὶ εἴργουσαι, etc.; *schol.* 'D' 11.270 (p. 367 van Thiel) μογοστόκοι· αἱ τοὺς μόγους ἐπικουφίζουσαι τῶν τικτουςῶν.

84 See Gow (1952) ii 490.

85 Thus Monaco (2007) 168–169; Miguélez Caverio (2013a) 337. *Manethoniana* 6.733 (ed. De Stefani) μογοστόκοι Εἰλείθυια is hard to evaluate.

86 Cf. Vian (1990) 307; Agosti (2013) 236.

(quoted above) and 25.41 μογοστόκος ... ἄρπη (on the birth of Pegasus from the Gorgon's severed head), since thunderbolt and sickle proved in fact very painful for Semele and Medusa respectively. The adjective appears twice with reference to the myth of Cronus and his sons: but while at *Dionysiaca* 25.560 the cruel god has swallowed a λίθον ... μογοστόκον, hard and painful to digest (b1: cf. 557 ὀκριόεν βαρὺ δείπνον, "a rugged, heavy meal"), at 41.73 we see him drinking a whole river whose water, μογοστόκον ... ὕδωρ, will make him vomit the heavy stone and thus relieve him of his pain (b2). The two meanings are intentionally juxtaposed at *Dionysiaca* 41.410–14, when Aphrodite compares her pregnancy to Leto's:

ἐννέα γὰρ πλήσασα μογοστόκα κύκλα Σελήνης  
 δριμύ βέλος μεθέπουσα δυπαθέος τοκετοῖο  
 Ἀρμονίην ἐλόχευσα, καὶ ἄλγεα ποικίλα πάσχει  
 ἀχρυμένη· κούρην δὲ μογοστόκον ἔλλαχε Λητώ,  
 Ἄρτεμιν Εἰλειθυίαν, ἀρηγόνα θηλυτεράων.

After nine entire months of hard travail I gave birth to Harmonia, enduring the bitter pangs of painful delivery; and now she is afflicted and suffers all sorts of grief. But Leto has borne a daughter who assists in travail, Artemis Eileithyia, helper of women.

The contrast between the two different uses of μογοστόκος, the former closely connected with pangs and suffering (of both mother and daughter), the latter almost 'glossed' with ἀρηγόνα θηλυτεράων, could not be more blatant.<sup>87</sup>

In the Christian poem, the use of Homeric glosses sometimes becomes an instrument to convey exegesis of the Gospel.<sup>88</sup> The synergy of Homeric

87 Among Nonnus' imitators, John of Gaza appears to adopt meaning (a) at line 113 (ed. Lauritzen) μυρία μοχθήσασα μογοστόκος, on which see Gigli Piccardi (2014) 417–418, meaning (b1) at line 406 μυριόκεντρα μογοστόκα λύματα λιμοῦ; (b1) also in George of Pisidia, *de vita humana* 58 (ed. Gonnelli) μογοστόκον ... λύπην, see Whitby (2014) 441 with n. 11.

88 This also holds true for a device that Nonnus inherited from his Hellenistic and Imperial predecessors, the employ of Homeric words in a different lexical class, sometimes involving also a different meaning. A representative case is that of the substantive σημάντωρ, occurring five times in the Homeric poems ('leader, commander', as in Apollonius of Rhodes 1.173 and 375 (ed. Vian and Delage): later in *Orphic Hymns* 7.6 (ed. Fayant) and often in Gregory of Nazianzus). Following in the footsteps of Triphiod. 237 (ed. Livrea) σημάντορι καπνῶ – see Miguélez Caverio (2013a) 252–253: probably from Callimachus fr. 228.40 Pfeiffer σαμάντριαν ... ἰ[ωάν, with Wilamowitz's supplement –, Nonnus uses it as an adjective referring to the voice (σημάντορα φωνήν *Dionysiaca* 15.120; σημάντορι φωνῇ *Dionysiaca* 37.551, 47.277, *Paraphrase* 1.119, 2.35, 5.38, 18.81; σημάντορι μύθῳ *Paraphrase* 13.121), as well as to the 'silence' (*Dionysiaca* 22.88 σημάντορι σιγῇ), according to his love for

scholarship and Christian hermeneutics may be challenging for modern readers. A typical instance is the use of διάκτορος at *Paraphrase* 5.21–4 (rendering John 5.7 Κύριε, ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω ἵνα ὅταν ταραχθῇ τὸ ὕδωρ βάλῃ με εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up”):

κοίρανε, νουσοκόμοιο φιλοστόργιοιο χατίζω·  
οὐ γὰρ ἔχω τινὰ φῶτα διάκτορον, ὄφρα κε πηγῆς  
θυιάδος αὐτοέλικτον ἰδὼν κυρτούμενον ὕδωρ  
εἰς ἱερὴν ἀσάμινθον ἐλαφρίζω με χαλάσση.

Lord, I lack a friendly, devoted assistant: I do not have a man acting as a minister, who might carry me into the sacred basin, seeing the spontaneously curling water of the frantic source.

This passage displays an intermingling of epic phraseology and New Testament language, which is one of the main stylistic features of the *Paraphrase*. The insertion of the *Wortlaut* of John, οὐ γὰρ ἔχω, is flanked by a couple of Homeric words, χατίζω (but Homer does not employ the first singular person)<sup>89</sup> and ἀσάμινθον; at l. 23 the typically Nonnian θυιάδος and αὐτοέλικτον<sup>90</sup> coexist with the allusion to a well-known Homeric passage, κυρτούμενον ὕδωρ being a variation of *Od.* 11.243–44 πορφύρεον δ’ ἄρα κύμα παριστάθη, οὐρεῖ ἴσον, / κυρτωθέν (the wave hiding the intercourse between Poseidon and Tyro); finally, at l. 24 χαλάσση comes from the Synoptic narrative (Mark 2.4, the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum). Moreover, τινὰ φῶτα διάκτορον combines the Homeric *unicum* τινὰ φῶτα (*Od.* 9.513, same *sedes*)<sup>91</sup> with διάκτορος, traditional epithet

antonyms: cf. Greco (2004) 152–153. Though the meaning of the adjective is ‘imperious’ or ‘evident’, when it is related either to either miracles performed by Christ (*Par.* 2.39, 5.38) or his prophetic words (13.121), the nuance of ‘voice giving a sign’ is not excluded: see Agosti (2003) 380–382. On Nonnus’ exegetical commitment in the *Paraphrase*, see most recently Franchi (2016) and Simelidis (2016) 289–298, with bibliography.

89 The clause reminds also of Hesiod *Op.* 21 (ed. West) ἔργοιο χατίζων.

90 In all likelihood, a new coinage (Nonnus is very fond of αὐτο- compounds): 26 times in the *Dionysiaca*, twice in the *Paraphrase*, later in Nonnian poets (Christodorus *AP* 2.269; John of Gaza 298, ed. Lauritzen).

91 After a single occurrence at verse-end at *Oracula Sibyllina* 2.92 (ed. Lightfoot) (a very awkward line), it became fashionable among fourth century poets: *Orphic Lithica* 469 (ed. Giannakis), *Visio Dorothei* (*P.Bodmer* 29) 127, 186, 222, Gregory of Nazianzus *Carmina* 1.1.8.36 (ed. Moreschini and Sykes) (always before feminine caesura). Later in *Homero-centones* 1.394 (ed. Schembra, from *Od.* 9.513 cit.) and Paul the Silentiary *S. Sophia* 943 (ed. De Stefani).

of Hermes from *Il.* 2.103 onwards,<sup>92</sup> whose meaning was disputed in antiquity. It was interpreted either as ‘messenger’ (*schol.* ‘D’ *Il.* 2.103, p. 89 van Thiel = Apollonius Sophista 58.17 Bekker διάγων τὰς ἀγγελίας; *schol.* V *Od.* 8.338, p. 386 Dindorf; *schol.* Q *Od.* 12.390, p. 552 Dindorf; *Etymologicum Symeonis* δ 196 Baldi), or as ‘servant, assistant’ (*Etymologicum Magnum* 268.22 Gaisford: παρὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις ποιηταῖς ἀπλῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ διακόνου τίθεται): the two meanings are equally present in later poets,<sup>93</sup> and Nonnus is no exception. In the major poem the epithet can mean διάκονος (*Dionysiaca* 1.1, quoted above; 21.271, 39.82, 41.291, 43.115) and ἄγγελος (2.591, 30.250, 31.107, 33.57), but at least in one passage the poet alludes to both meanings (21.271–72):

οὐ μὲν ἐγὼ τελέσω σε διάκτορον· οὐ δύνασαι γάρ  
λάτριον ἔργον ἔχειν οἰκοσσόον

I will not make you my messenger, because you are not able to do such a service in my home.

Since the Indian king Deriades is addressing a Dionysiac herald, διάκτορον ‘messenger’ is at its place here: but the adjective λάτριον also suggests the meaning ‘servant’ (consistent with Deriades’ arrogant tone).<sup>94</sup>

In the Christian poem, if the meaning ‘messenger’ is found in a couple of passages,<sup>95</sup> in most of the occurrences διάκτορος is actually equivalent to διάκονος.<sup>96</sup> Coming back to *Paraphrase* 5.22, Nonnus apparently follows the current explanation of John’s passage, according to which the ἄνθρωπος was a servant.<sup>97</sup> But things are not so simple. First of all, the fact that διάκτορος was an epithet of Hermes implies some additional meanings: (a) the Christian interpretation of Hermes as an equivalent to the archangel Gabriel – as a consequence διάκτορος can be read also as ‘messenger’;<sup>98</sup> (b) the interpretation of Hermes as

92 See B. Mader, *Lfgre* s.v.; Richardson (1974) 286; Vergados (2013) 487 (suggesting that the poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* may have understood it as ‘leader, conductor’).

93 See Vian (1997) 136; Hollis (2009) 325–326.

94 Cf. Agosti (2003) 338; Magnelli (2004) 306.

95 4.98 νέου βιότοιο διάκτορος ἔρχεται ὥρη and 13.90 ἐμὸν ... διάκτορον, ὄντινα πέμψω: see Greco (2004) 130; Caprara (2005) 214–215.

96 1.216; 5.22; 6.46; 12.8 and 103–07; 18.52, 83, 105. See Livrea (1989) 170–171; De Stefani (2002) 240; Agosti (2003) 337; Franchi (2013) 338–339.

97 See Cyril of Alexandria (Nonnus’ main exegetical source) *On John* 2.208 (PG 73.340B = i.307–08 Pusey); also Theodore of Mopsuestia *On John* 71.9–11 Vosté.

98 A typical case of *Usurpation*: see Agosti (2011). Furthermore, in many ancient manuscripts preserving the interpolated passage of John 5.3b–4, the water was stirred up by the very ἄγγελος κυρίου: see Agosti (2003) 339.

a *figura* of Christ-Logos.<sup>99</sup> Some exegetes of John's Gospel did in fact read the 'man' as a prefiguration of Christ: e.g., Gregory of Nazianzus *Oration* 40.33 (ed. Moreschini and Galloway) χθές ἐπὶ κλίνης ἔρριψο παρειμένους καὶ λελυμένους καὶ οὐχ εἶχες ἄνθρωπον ... σήμερον εὑρες ἄνθρωπον, τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ Θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ Θεὸν ἄνθρωπον ("Yesterday you were flung upon a bed, exhausted and paralyzed, and you had no one ... Today you found a Man who is also God, or rather God and Man")<sup>100</sup> – pointing once more to the meaning 'attendant'.<sup>101</sup> Summing up, the meaning of φῶτα διάκτορον at l. 22 is left open to different interpretations, both plausible and well supported by the Patristic tradition. Nonnus brilliantly exploited the possibilities of Homeric exegesis in order to suggest multiple explanations of John's passage: this is his personal way of combining Athens with Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion: The New Homer (Very New)

The first editor of the *Dionysiaca*, Geraard Falkenburg (†1578), full of enthusiasm for the poem he was sending to the printer, stated that Nonnus' elegant verses could be considered "a rich paraphrasis of Homeric poetry".<sup>103</sup> We deem it unlikely that the Panopolitan poet would have approved of this view: competing with Homer was just one item in his complex poetical agenda. Yet, if we use 'paraphrasis' in a broader sense, there may be a grain of truth in Falkenburg's judgement. For Nonnus, re-writing St John's Gospel was both a literary and a theological enterprise. In the same way, re-writing Homer meant both highlighting the originality of his own poetry and stressing his allegiance to the great father of Greek epic tradition – an allegiance that, in Nonnus'

99 Cf. also Lamberton (1986) 42 and 145 n. 2, with bibliography. Nonnus was surely aware of it, see Golega (1930) 70; Accorinti (1995).

100 Other instances: Ambrose *On Mysteries* 24 (ed. Botte) *denique paralyticus ille expectabat hominem. Quem illum nisi dominum Iesum natum ex virgine?*, Augustine *On John* 17.7 (ed. Willems), etc.: for a more detailed analysis, see Agosti (2003) 340–342.

101 Especially if we take into account the widespread interpretation of παῖς θεοῦ as 'servant of God', according to the Christological reading of Isaiah 42.6, 46.13, 49.6, 52.10 and 53.

102 For other Christian writers see Heine, in this volume 339–52 (Origen), and van der Poll, in this volume 309–34 (Clement of Alexandria).

103 Falkenburg (1569) f. 4v: "huius poetae ornamenta nihil esse aliud possumus dicere, quam luculenta Homerici carminis paraphrasin". His prefatory epistle to Sambucus (János Zsámboky) is one of the most passionate apologies of Nonnus ever written. On Falkenburg's and Sambucus' Nonnian studies, see Tissoni (1998) 47–51; Agosti (1999) 113–114; Tissoni (2016) 705–706. It is interesting to compare the judgment expressed by Johannes Bordatus in the prefatory epigram to his edition of *Par.* (Parisii 1561), who opposes a Nonnus "full of the Homeric graces only" in the major poem to the Christian poet of the *Paraphrase*: the text in Agosti (1999) 100.

time, implied much more than just literary succession. Once we keep in mind the Late Antique image of Homer – a sage, a philosopher, and a holy man, whose poetry had immense ethical and theological value<sup>104</sup> – we can properly understand what being a ‘new Homer’ could mean. Scholars now agree that Nonnus was a Christian, yet with a solid Neoplatonic background and a strong bent for religious syncretism; in many episodes of the *Dionysiaca* we find a ‘Christianized’ Dionysus.<sup>105</sup> Nothing better than placing the great poem under the sign of ‘Homer the Theologian’.<sup>106</sup>

Paradoxically enough, the new Homer from Panopolis was most innovative and un-Homeric in his language, style, metrics, and narrative technique. But this did not trouble him – nor were his followers troubled. Colluthus’ *Rape of Helen* joins Nonnian style and metrics with Homeric ideology.<sup>107</sup> Neither Musaeus nor Paul the Silentiary refrain from inserting among their elegant Nonnian verses a violation of Hermann’s Bridge (avoidance of word-break after the ‘fourth trochee’) coming directly from the *Odyssey*.<sup>108</sup> And Christodorus (*AP* 2.320), describing Homer as σύννομος Ἀπόλλωνι, πατήρ ἐμός, ἰσῆθεος φῶς (“my father, a god-like man, companion of Apollo”), echoes the last line of the *Dionysiaca*, on the apotheosis of Dionysus as σύνθρονος Ἀπόλλωνι, συνέστιος υἱέι Μαιῆς (“on a throne beside Apollo, at the hearth beside Maia’s son”): Homer like Dionysus, and Nonnus, beside Homer, as Christodorus’ second literary ‘father’.<sup>109</sup> The old and the new Homer worked well together.<sup>110</sup>

104 Lambertson (1986) is the reference study on such topics. Cf. more recently Van Liefferinge (2002); Agosti (2004) and (2005); Lambertson and Sheppard in this volume, 390–407 and 408–28.

105 See Tissoni (1998) 71–79; Gigli Piccardi (2003) 50–60 and 74–83; Spanoudakis (2007); Frangoulis (2008); Shorrock (2011) 49–115; Agosti (2012) 381–382, with further bibliography; Franchi (2013) 145–168; Spanoudakis (2013); Accorinti (2013) 111–113, 1120–1121, 1125–1126; Hernández de la Fuente (2014); Accorinti (2015) 55–69; Shorrock (2016). On Dionysiac elements in the *Paraphrase*, also Accorinti (1995); Gigli Piccardi (1995); Caprara (2008); Greco (2008); Doroszewski (2014); Spanoudakis (2014a) 41–52 and (2016).

106 Such was the main title of Lambertson’s (1986) pivotal book.

107 See Magnelli (2008) 162–164.

108 *Od.* 5.272 ὁψὲ δύνοντα Βοώτην, re-used by both Musaeus 213 (ed. Livrea and Eleuteri) (if Canter’s emendation is right) and Paul the Silentiary *S. Sophia* 854 (ed. De Stefani). See De Stefani (2011b) xxxiii n. 90; Magnelli (2014a) 282 n. 74, with further bibliography.

109 Magnelli (2013) 307–308. On σύννομος, see also Tissoni (2000) 217–218; on πατήρ ἐμός, Agosti (2009) 106–107.

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**PART 2**

***Rhetoric***





# Homer in the Theory and Teaching of Rhetoric

*Malcolm Heath*

## 1 Introduction

Teachers of rhetoric in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods received their pupils from the grammarian's school, with a grounding in classical literature in which Homer was prominently represented. If the grammarians had done their job properly, the students would bring with them a knowledge of (and, hopefully, an enthusiasm for) Homer, which the rhetoricians could exploit by using him as a familiar point of reference, and as a source of illustrative examples drawn from texts whose exemplary status was beyond question.

That is a more cautious formulation of the rhetoricians' relationship to Homer than some that can be found in modern scholarship. Consider, for example, this claim for Homer's primacy at all educational levels:<sup>1</sup>

Starting with elementary school, Homeric poems were the primary object of study at every stage of education; indeed, it was the very text through which children in the Hellenic world learned to read. But Homer was also the focus of attention in the grammatical schools, which formed the first level of higher education, and in the rhetorical schools, its second and highest level.

That seems implausibly extravagant. But how plausible is even the cautious formulation? On further reflection, one might note that the style and narrative technique of an archaic epic poet cannot be reproduced directly in prose oratory, and that the highly theorised form of rhetoric which the rhetoricians taught seems entirely alien to Homer. That surely limits the poet's potential usefulness to rhetoricians. On the other hand, the aim of rhetorical theory is to make explicit techniques that are implicitly embedded in any instance of skilful persuasion, and that are in principle available to anyone with talent or practical experience. Oratory was practised long before the theoretical formalisation of rhetoric. Ancient rhetoricians were therefore able to maintain that rhetoric originated among the heroes, not (of course) in a technically theorised

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<sup>1</sup> Finkelberg (2012) 16–17.

form, but in a form based on experience.<sup>2</sup> It was easy for them to trace the teaching of rhetoric back to the heroic age. When Peleus sent his inexperienced son to the Trojan War, he appointed Phoenix as tutor, instructing him to teach Achilles to be “a speaker of words” as well as “a doer of deeds” (*Il.* 9.442–3). Moreover, there is explicit commentary in Homer on matters of rhetorical style and technique: Antenor describes the contrasting styles of Odysseus and Menelaus in their pre-war embassy to Troy (*Il.* 3.205–24). When Hermogenes singles out Homer as the best poet, he adds that this may well be equivalent to saying that Homer is the best rhetor and speech-writer, since a discursive imitation of a discursive art must itself be an instance of that art (*Id.* 389.18–391.4 Rabe). As an exemplar of good rhetorical practice, therefore, Homer is himself a teacher of rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, he could be seen as standing at the head of a chain of influences that reached down through the dominant figures in a variety of prose genres: Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Demosthenes.<sup>4</sup> This chapter attempts to assess the relationship of that image to the reality of the professional activity of rhetoricians as theorists and teachers.

## 2 Problems of Interpretation

The scholia to Demosthenes provide us with glimpses of the chain of influences in action. The combination of criticism and encouragement in the *First Olynthiac* is traced to a Thucydidean model, and (before that) to the speeches of Odysseus and Nestor in *Iliad* 2 (prol. 2.14–30 Dilts); the opening of *On the Crown* is seen as emulation (ζῆλος) of the line with which Zeus opens the council of the gods at the beginning of *Iliad* 8 (sch. Dem. 18.1, 200.10–17). Yet references to Homer in the Demosthenes scholia are very scarce, and they are mainly used to explain points of language. These are, in fact, the only two references concerned with aspects of rhetorical technique. Both passages are in the strand of scholia that I would attribute to Menander Rhetor, who emerges as a

2 Sopater *RG* 5.5.30–6.14 Walz; and, among the other late antique prolegomena edited by Rabe (1931), see 22.14–24.4; 51.5–23 (Troilus); 188.14–189.11; 243.13–18. For a dissenting voice: 267.3–269.3 (Marcellinus). Radermacher (1951) 3–10 collects additional testimonia. For recent studies of techniques of persuasion in Homer which highlight continuities with later Greek rhetorical theory see Dentice di Accadia Ammone (2012) and Knudsen (2014).

3 See, for example, [D.H.] 310.23–311.9, 324.6–8, 354.12–20 Usener-Radermacher; [Hermog.] *Meth.* 448.21–2, 450.2–3 Rabe; Men. Rh. 3.434.11–18 Spengel; Quint. 10.1.46–50, 11.3.158.

4 [Hermog.] *Meth.* 436.6–15 (Homer-Plato-Demosthenes); 448.4–19 (Homer-Thucydides-Demosthenes-Isocrates); 448.21–449.19 (Homer-Herodotus); 450.2–451.8 (Homer-Demosthenes). Cf. Longin. *Subl.* 13–14.

commentator who accepts the image of Homer as an influence on the masters of classical prose, but makes little practical use of it in his interpretation of Demosthenes' rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> If this proves to be typical, we would have to conclude that the rhetoricians' attempt to associate their profession with Homer's glory did not correspond to any substantial debt.

For a contrasting example of a rhetorician who does make substantial use of Homer, we may turn to an anonymous author who wrote four short essays on rhetorical topics that have been transmitted among the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. I have argued that he worked in the second century CE, and that he may be an epigraphically attested Alexandrian rhetorician named Aelius Serapion, who in turn is probably the author of a larger body of work attested in the *Suda* under the name of Aelius Sarapion.<sup>6</sup> Since these inferences are all uncertain, however, I shall refer to him here as pseudo-Dionysius.

Two of these four essays are on the same subject, "figured" speeches: that is, speeches that have a covert aim that goes beyond or even runs contrary to their overt aim. The fact that the two essays treat the subject somewhat differently has given rise to suspicion that they are by different authors. The large amount of shared content would in that case imply that they have independently modified a common source. But I am inclined to see a single author reworking his own earlier treatment in order to make a different point. Both essays start from the fact that some rhetoricians deny the possibility of figured speech (295.3–10, 323.6–10). The first illustrates different categories of figured speech, thus giving practical instruction in the relevant techniques while simultaneously demonstrating by example that figured speech does exist. The second makes the more radical counter-claim that there is *no* speech that is *not* figured (323.11–14). In the essay's conclusion the author says that he has proved his initial claim (348.22–329.3). That is not true: accumulating positive instances of speech that is figured cannot prove the universal negative claim that there is no speech that is not figured. Perhaps the author recognized the logical flaw in his argument: if so, it would explain why the attempted conclusion is followed by nine pages of unsystematic notes.

Pseudo-Dionysius is particularly interested in *Iliad* 2, which is discussed in both essays (312.1–314.18, 327.19–335.4). Agamemnon's speech "testing" the army (*Il.* 2.110–41) is an obvious example of figured speech: overtly it proposes

5 On the sources of the Demosthenes scholia see Heath (2004) 132–183. Menander makes more use of Homer in his treatise on epideictic (that is, the second of the two treatises transmitted under his name: Heath (2004) 127–131).

6 Heath (2003). The chapters on epideictic in the pseudo-Dionysian corpus are by a different author.

that the Greeks should give up and go home, but its covert aim is to rouse their fighting spirit. That is why Agamemnon reminds his audience of Zeus's promise (given with a binding nod of assent) that Troy would be taken; why he mentions that Zeus is easily able to fulfil the promise; and why he uses loaded terms like "dishonour", "disgrace", and "flight" to describe what he is proposing.<sup>7</sup> But he conceals the intent behind these provocative expressions by giving his speech an emotional colouring, so that the audience will attribute the weakness of its arguments to emotional stress rather than covert design. In view of the chaos that ensues, one might conclude that Agamemnon's tactics were ill-judged. But pseudo-Dionysius looks deeper (327.19–328.25). Agamemnon foresaw the effect of his speech: his covert aim was not to provoke a contrary response from the army directly, but to give the other leaders an opening which they could exploit to rouse the army's fighting spirit. That is the plan which he explained to his senior commanders in advance: "πρῶτα δ' ἐγὼν ἔπεσιν πειρήσομαι, ἢ θέμις ἐστίν, / καὶ φεύγειν σὺν νηυσὶ πολυκλήϊσι κελεύσω· ὑμεῖς δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος ἐρητύειν ἑπέεσσιν ..." – "I shall test them with an address and tell them to make for home with their many-benched ships: and you must try to restrain them with your orders ..." (*Il.* 2.73–5). Pseudo-Dionysius continues his analysis into the sequel (331.5–335.4). After the senior commanders have rallied the troops, in accordance with Agamemnon's plan, Odysseus and Nestor both address them (*Il.* 2.284–332, 337–68). But Nestor seems to say essentially the same as Odysseus: why, then, does Agamemnon single out Nestor's superiority in council for praise (*Il.* 2.370)? In fact, our author argues, Agamemnon is aware that Nestor had taken an important additional step: Odysseus persuaded the army to *stay*, but Nestor persuades them to *deploy*. In simulating agreement with a previous speaker in order to say something more or different Nestor is using one of pseudo-Dionysius' categories of figured speech (297.18–23, 331.1–3).

As with the Demosthenes scholia, however, we risk giving a misleading impression of this rhetorician's relationship to Homer if we look only at his use of Homer: his non-use of Homer must also be taken into account, and we must compare his use of Homer with his use of other authors. The Homeric citations are concentrated in the two essays on figured speeches, and are predominant in the second, which promises to illustrate all the types of figured speech from Homer (324.3–8). Of the other two essays, one gives advice to students on how to evaluate the books they have read and make profitable use of them; the other is concerned with mistakes to avoid in declamation. The former mentions some Homeric characters as examples of instructive representation of character (Paris, Pandarus, Nestor, and Hector); and in the discussion of maxim (γνώμη) quotations from Homer provide illustrations of how to use

7 Compare Choricus of Gaza *Decl.* 3, *theoria*.



them (376.1–11; 382.17–384.11). In the essay on mistakes in declamation, Homer is mentioned only twice, in passing and without reference to any specific passage (361.9, 373.20).

How are we to interpret the very uneven distribution of Homeric material in this set of essays? That is a difficult question. To see why, consider a comment which pseudo-Dionysius makes in the second essay when he discusses Agamemnon's response to Nestor's speech (331.13–17):

The schoolmasters say that, because the mass of the army praised Odysseus, Agamemnon praised the old man as well, so that he would not be upset – as when little children are giving displays in school and the teacher hands out encouragement all round so that the children don't cry.

The schoolmasters are grammarians. They have missed the point of the speeches, and their hidden subtleties, in part because they lack the rhetorician's specialist expertise, but also because they are interpreting Agamemnon's comment out of their own limited and limiting experience: the rhetorical strategy which they attribute to Agamemnon is one suited to dealing with the kiddies (παιδάρια) they teach.<sup>8</sup> On this view, the observation involves a sarcasm at the grammarians' expense – and one might imagine a teacher appealing to his own pupils' sense of their superiority over the younger children in the grammarian's school.

That, at least, is an interpretation of the passage that I once proposed.<sup>9</sup> I have since had second thoughts. The other three essays in this small corpus all show such evident signs of painstaking attention to clarity of structure and explicit sign-posting as to suggest that they originated as lectures to students.<sup>10</sup> The second essay on figured speeches does not, and its attempt to develop a radical argument against those who deny the possibility of figured speeches might more plausibly be read as an intervention in a contemporary debate among professional rhetoricians. The sarcasm in the reference to schoolmasters would then be directed primarily against the inferior insight of the author's own colleagues and rivals.<sup>11</sup> If that is right, then the different patterns of exemplification in the two essays on figured speeches reflect the

8 In the exegetical scholia, the view that Nestor says the same as Odysseus in different words is found in bT 2.336–59; bT 2.370b subscribes to the thesis of a fair division of praise. But bT 3.350 suggests that Nestor's emphasis on Zeus is more gratifying to the king than Odysseus' populist appeal to Calchas (implicitly recalling 1.106–8); and bT 3.370a makes the same distinction between the two speeches as pseudo-Dionysius.

9 Heath (2004) 231–232.

10 Heath (2003) 96–97.

11 Pseudo-Dionysius lays claim to insights that others have missed: 331.3–5, 341.5–342.3.

difference between a student-directed teaching text and a theoretical treatise addressed to the author's professional peers. The first essay exposes students to examples from many different sources: that is an effective way of making the point that figured speech is a widely used technique, which aspirant orators need to master. But if the second essay contributes to a theoretical debate with other rhetoricians about whether figured speech exists at all, nothing is lost by concentrating on a single source, and much is gained if that source is highly authoritative.

But I have also had third thoughts. The second essay concludes by coming back to a principle stated (it says) at the outset: that the rhetor is involved in a double contest, concerned both with the facts and with character, and that the contest of character is dominant, and always involves figured speech (349.3–7). That is, in fact, a good argument for the universal negative claim that there is no speech that is not figured – though it has one important drawback: although what it says about speech is true, it involves an equivocation that evacuates “figured” of distinctive meaning and makes it useless as a technical term. But the author did not, in fact, make the point about the double contest at the outset of this essay. It is, however, made in the two essays that are not about figured speeches (359.3–6, 377.7–11). Though the order has been reversed in the manuscript tradition, these other essays would precede any discussion of figured speeches in a well-designed lecture course. Perhaps, then, the second essay on figured speeches is, after all, part of a series of lectures to students. If so, then pseudo-Dionysius appears to have tried out two alternative pedagogic strategies: one relying on a demonstration that figured speech is widely used, the other relying on a demonstration that it is used by a highly authoritative source.

### 3 Quantitative Data

From the preceding discussion, we can draw one inescapable conclusion: interpreting a rhetorician's use of Homer is a speculative and unavoidably uncertain exercise, though one that cannot here be shirked. Subject to that *caveat*, we may return to our primary questions: what do teachers and theorists use Homer *for*, and why do they use *him* for those purposes? To make any progress with those qualitative questions, we must also address some quantitative questions, including (most obviously): *how much* use do teachers and theorists of rhetoric make of Homer? That initial query leads to a number of sub-questions. First, *which parts* of Homer do they use? That is, how are their uses of Homer distributed across the Homeric corpus? Secondly, *where*

do they use them? That is, how are their uses of Homer distributed between different rhetorical sub-disciplines? Thirdly, how far is their choice of which parts of Homer to use influenced by the fact that they are rhetoricians? That is a quantitative question, in the sense that answering it requires comparative data to establish how closely the rhetoricians' distribution of interest across the Homeric corpus corresponds to, or deviates from, the distribution of interest found in authors beyond that professional circle.

To address that last, comparative question, I have gathered three sets of data. First, to establish a baseline, I consulted the Leuven Database of Ancient Books to determine the distribution of Homer papyri over the forty-eight books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, I surveyed an extensive sample of rhetorical treatises to produce an estimate of the distribution of references to Homer by book. For practical reasons, this sample was limited to texts available in an edition with a convenient *index locorum* or register of sources. One further quantitative comparison seemed worth making: how do theorists and teachers of rhetoric acting in that capacity compare with more or less contemporary authors who are rhetorically educated but are not engaged in writing rhetorical theory or rhetorical text-books? Since this last group is intractably large, a short-cut was unavoidable. I therefore used the *index locorum* in Kindstrand's book on Homer in what is now generally (though I think unhelpfully) called the "Second Sophistic".<sup>13</sup> This provides data for Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, and Maximus of Tyre. In the following tables these three samples are referred to as Baseline, Rhetors, and Sophists respectively. Because the samples are of different size, the absolute numbers are not directly comparable. I have therefore indicated the absolute total of Homeric appearances counted at the head of each sample's column, and then specified the percentage of Homer's appearances within that sample that fall within a given book.

It is important to emphasise that there are problems inherent in this data collection exercise more fundamental than the limited scope of the samples I have described, and the likelihood that my data collection was not (even within those samples) entirely thorough and accurate. Other considerations raise deeper doubts about the validity of the numbers. For example, how far apart do references to the same passage have to be to count as separate citations? How can a reference to Homer which consists of a lengthy and detailed

12 The searches of the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (<http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/search.php>) were undertaken in the summer of 2013. The results include both texts of Homer and papyri containing Homer citations.

13 Kindstrand (1973). See Heath (2004) xiv–xvii for my reservations about this term as currently used.

analysis of an extended passage be made commensurate with the quotation of a single phrase to illustrate a figure of speech? Moreover, some quotations become stock illustrations, which different rhetoricians recycle mechanically: how can allowance be made for the inflated frequency of references to the book from which that example is taken? The quantitative data are therefore inescapably fuzzy, and must be approached with the utmost caution. They cannot provide us with anything more than a preliminary diagnostic tool. But in providing us with such a tool, the data may nevertheless be of some value.

TABLE 1      Iliad

Book	Baseline	Rhetors	Sophists
	1492	282	597
1	14.7	7.4	11.6
2	11.1	19.9	16.4
3	6.3	6.4	3.0
4	4.2	5.7	4.0
5	7.3	5.3	5.7
6	4.1	1.4	2.8
7	3.6	2.8	3.7
8	3.4	0.4	3.2
9	4.3	7.8	6.0
10	4.3	3.2	3.0
11	4.2	1.8	3.5
12	2.0	2.5	1.2
13	3.9	3.9	2.8
14	2.1	2.8	3.0
15	3.2	3.2	3.2
16	3.7	5.3	3.4
17	2.9	1.4	2.3
18	2.4	3.2	3.9
19	1.6	1.8	2.2
20	1.9	2.8	3.2
21	2.3	3.2	2.7
22	2.1	2.5	3.5
23	2.6	2.5	3.9
24	1.7	2.8	1.8

TABLE 2      *Odyssey*

Book	Baseline	Rhetors	Sophists
	298	101	399
1	4.4	9.9	4.3
2	4.0	0.0	1.8
3	6.7	1.0	4.0
4	9.1	3.0	11.3
5	3.4	6.9	6.3
6	3.0	4.0	4.3
7	3.0	1.0	3.5
8	3.7	6.9	9.5
9	6.4	17.8	8.8
10	5.7	5.9	4.8
11	9.1	7.9	9.3
12	4.4	3.0	6.5
13	1.3	5.9	2.8
14	2.0	3.0	1.3
15	4.0	2.0	1.5
16	3.0	1.0	1.8
17	6.0	5.0	5.0
18	3.4	4.0	2.5
19	3.7	6.9	4.3
20	1.7	2.0	2.0
21	3.0	1.0	1.5
22	4.0	1.0	2.3
23	2.0	0.0	0.3
24	3.0	1.0	0.8

In the Baseline sample, the *Iliad* is represented about 5 times more frequently than the *Odyssey*. There is a strong bias towards the early books of the *Iliad*: interest drops off until book 4, which is close to the mean average (4.2%) and median (3.5%), though there is a recovery for book 5. This bias towards the early books is not present in the *Odyssey*. That is perhaps because the *Iliad* was used as a school text more than the *Odyssey*: for many educational purposes, the text did not need to be read in its entirety.

What about the Rhetors? The *Iliad* is again far more represented than the *Odyssey* (about 2.8 times more frequent). The absolute totals are much smaller than with the papyri, which should make us cautious in drawing conclusions: with smaller numbers, the distribution is more prone to random effects and any apparent pattern might be a product of chance. At first sight, it seems that the rhetors reproduce the bias towards the initial books of the *Iliad*, though in a slightly skewed fashion: the peak has shifted from book 1 to book 2. The prominence of book 2 is readily explained by the fact that that, as we have already seen, it contains many interesting speeches; its usefulness for rhetoricians was further enhanced by the catalogue of ships, which served as a convenient repository of stylistic devices. The next conspicuous peak is book 9, which also contains interesting speeches. There are interesting speeches in book 1, too: so it is possible that its prominence is due to rhetorical concerns, rather than any residual initial bias. On the other hand, the respectable showing of books 3–5 may be evidence that the initial bias still has some effect on the rhetoricians' selection of passages. We must therefore reckon with multiple factors influencing the rhetoricians' distribution of interest. Even so, there are features of this distribution for which no obvious explanation suggests itself. Consider the peak at book 16: most of the citations relate to stylistic effects in the first 300 or so lines. Why should rhetoricians have found a particular density of interesting stylistic effects in those lines? I have no answer to that question.

When Kindstrand's three Sophists are compared with the Rhetors, we find that the general bias towards the *Iliad* remains, but to a much reduced degree: the *Iliad* receives only 1.5 times as many citations. This suggests that the *Iliad*'s status as a school text becomes a less significant influence on the distribution of interest as we move away from educational contexts and towards sophisticated compositions targeted at an educated adult audience. Within the *Iliad* the two profiles look similar, though with the Rhetors' peaks somewhat flattened out. In a three-way comparison, including the Baseline provided by the papyri, Kindstrand's Sophists are generally somewhere between the two. There is, in fact, a relatively strong correlation both between the Sophists and the papyri ( $r = .85$ ) and between the Rhetors and the Sophists ( $r = .89$ ), but the correlation between the Rhetors and the papyri is weaker ( $r = .69$ ). Those figures apply to the *Iliad*. For the *Odyssey* all the correlations are weaker (as one would expect, given the smaller number of references). Here, too, the correlation between the Rhetors and the papyri is weakest ( $r = .33$ ); but the Sophists are more correlated with the papyri than with the Rhetors ( $r = .73$  and  $.60$  respectively). The three-way comparison therefore supports the conclusion suggested by comparing the Rhetors with the Baseline data of the papyri: the

rhetoricians are influenced by professional concerns in the distribution of their attention to Homer. That is a very general conclusion, however, and only confirms what we might in any case have predicted. To make further progress, we need to look more closely at the ways in which the rhetoricians make use of passages from Homer.

#### 4 Homer in the Rhetorical Corpus

In using a model that is in many respects very distant from what they wanted their students to produce, the rhetoricians must have been selective, not only in which parts of Homer they used, but also in what they used him for. The obvious next step, therefore, is to determine how far that selectivity is reflected in the distribution of Homeric citations between different rhetorical sub-disciplines. That requires a survey of the use of Homer in rhetorical textbooks. A convenient framework for this survey is provided by the late antique rhetorical corpus: that is, the corpus that from the third century onwards gradually formed around the two authentic Hermogenean texts, *On Issues* and *On Types of Style*. The other works included in the corpus were Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, and the works *On Invention* and *On Method* that were falsely attributed to Hermogenes.<sup>14</sup> This corpus broadly reflects the structure of the rhetorical curriculum in late antiquity: as we proceed through it, I will make reference to related texts by other rhetoricians.

We begin with the *progymnasmata*, the elementary exercises that provided an introduction to the study of rhetoric. In Aphthonius, Homeric references consist of five 1-line quotations from Homer illustrating different kinds of maxim (*gnōmē*-γνώμη, 7.7–8.2 Rabe), and a 1-line quotation from Odysseus' description of Eurybates illustrating *ekphrasis* (ἐκφρασις, 37.3–4, quoting *Od.* 19.246). In addition, the worked example of maxim (concerned with the evils of poverty) refers to Irus and more broadly to Odysseus' adventures in Ithaca (9.16–10.2). The concentration of Homer-citations in the section on maxim is interesting, since we have already observed it in the pseudo-Dionysian essay on assessing books. In the *Progymnasmata* falsely attributed to Hermogenes, Homeric references also concentrate on maxim: three 1-line quotations (8.19, 9.14–17), identical to examples in Aphthonius; one of these ("it is not good to have many rulers: let there be a single ruler", *Il.* 2.204) provides the theme for a worked example (10.3–21), which also includes a quotation from the Doloneia. A 1-line

14 On the formation of the corpus see Heath (2004) 43–51.

quotation from the description of Thersites provides an example of *ekphrasis* (22.11–12 quoting *Il.* 2.219). The instructions for encomium allude to Patroclus' Funeral Games. Nicolaus, similarly, uses one of the standard Homeric illustrations of maxim, and four others (26.8–28.8 Felten); there is also a 1-line quotation illustrating comparison (61.7–13, quoting *Il.* 21.258).

Theon is somewhat different.<sup>15</sup> Making the point that narrative can be brief or extended (2.80.2–7 Spengel), he mentions Odysseus' account to the Phaeacians as an example of extended narrative, while brief narrative is exemplified by Antilochus' admirably concise situation-report to Achilles: "Patroclus is fallen" (κεῖται Πάτροκλος, *Il.* 18.20). The *Odyssey* as a whole illustrates one of five ways to structure a narrative – starting in the middle, and moving back to the beginning before proceeding to the end (86.8–17). A 2-line quotation shows how to invoke the support of a famous person in anecdote (*chreia* [χρεία], 103.11–19, quoting *Od.* 18.136–7); *ekphrasis* is illustrated by the two examples used in pseudo-Hermogenes and Aphthonius, and by the making of Achilles' arms (118.9–15, 23–4); lines from Homer are also used to illustrate ambiguity and the lack of clarity produced by archaism (129.22–7).

That is a surprisingly limited collection. Evidently, the authors of these texts could take some awareness of Homer for granted: that hardly needs saying. But most of the examples are brief quotations, the point of which does not depend on knowing the context. There are a few more extensive allusions that imply familiarity with certain episodes (the making of Achilles' arms, Patroclus' Funeral Games, Odysseus's narrative to the Phaeacians, and his experiences on his return to Ithaca), and with the most distinctive feature of the overall structure of the *Odyssey*. Even so, we cannot say on the basis of this set of data that the authors of the progymnastic treatises went out of their way to use Homer as a source of rhetorical instruction at this initial stage. One might also find the use of Homer qualitatively disappointing: how can one-line quotations do justice to Homer's rhetorical art? On the other hand, these one-liners do have at least one pedagogic merit: they encapsulate in an easily memorised form a minimum content that will be accessible even to students who have no notion of the line's original context. Moreover, that minimum does not impose a limit on their exploitation. One could imagine a student who is familiar with the context being able to extract more value from the example: not only what an *ekphrasis* is, but also an extended example of how to compose one. We must remember, too, how little we know about the relationship between the textbook and the teacher's oral exposition in class. If the textbooks were primarily

15 Theon's date is disputed. I argue for a late dating in Heath (2002/3); a first-century CE date is more widely favoured.



a resource for teachers,<sup>16</sup> it is conceivable that the one-line quotations served as a prompt on which a teacher could elaborate as he thought appropriate.

So much for the textbooks on progymnasmata. What of progymnasmatic exercises themselves? Taking the collection transmitted under Libanius' name as a sample, we find Homeric subjects in a refutation of Chryses' visit to the Greek camp and a confirmation of the anger of Achilles; there are encomia on Diomedes, Odysseus, Achilles, and Thersites; invectives on Achilles and Hector; and comparisons of Achilles with Diomedes and Ajax with Achilles; there are instances of *ethopoeia* (ἠθοποιΐα, a composition in which the student imagines what so-and-so would have said in such-and-such a situation) based on Andromache's lament for Hector; Achilles' for Patroclus; Achilles when the Greeks are being beaten; Achilles when Briseis is taken from him; Menelaus on learning of the death of Agamemnon; and Odysseus when he is trapped in the cave, when he sees his comrades being eaten, and after killing the suitors (the attribution of these last two to Libanius is suspect); and there is an *ekphrasis* inspired by Patroclus' Funeral Games.<sup>17</sup> This is a respectable presence, but in a collection of more than 140 items by no means a dominant one. Even so, these examples suggest the possibility that the students' familiarity with Homer may have been exploited, less as a source of rhetorical insight, and more as a source of material for their exercises.

Theon's textbook has more to tell us. When he defends the value of paraphrase as an exercise he gives two examples of passages from Homer paraphrased by later authors (62.21–63.2). One is from Archilochus (F131 West), echoing *Odyssey* 18.136–7. The other is Phoenix's description of a sacked city in *Iliad* 9.593–4, echoed by Demosthenes in the *False Embassy* (19.65; cf. [Hermog.] *Meth.* 33, 450.20–451.4), and by Aeschines in *Against Ctesiphon* (3.157). Metaphrase of classical authors, including Homer, is an attested student exercise, which was conceptualised as entering into competition with the original author: the surviving fragments of Sopater's metaphrases speak of "contesting" (ἀμιλλώμενος) with the text.<sup>18</sup> There is a passage in Libanius where a student is reported as complaining that he has been held back by repeated "contests" (ἀμιλλαι) with Homer and Demosthenes when he wanted to move on to more advanced ("complete") exercises (*Or.* 34.15–16). I have suggested that the student was irked by having to write metaphrases when he wanted to be writing declamations. That is not certain: another possibility (which

16 On the diverse purposes of rhetorical technography see Heath (2004) 270–276.

17 Homer in worked examples: Webb (2010); cf. Gibson (2013). The Libanius collection is available in English translation in Gibson (2008).

18 Text: Gloeckner (1910) 506.15. Compare Quint. 10.5.5–8.

I also mentioned, and which is preferred by Rafaella Cribiore) is that “contests” refers to refutation, one of the standard progymnasmata.<sup>19</sup> But the element of competition in metaphor is worth noting: recall, in particular, Longinus’ strong sense of how the “imitation and emulation” of classical masters can inspire high achievers, and his description of Plato’s beneficial, if unduly quarrelsome, spear-fights with Homer (*Subl.* 13.2–14.3). Using Homer as a model or target in exercises might therefore have been seen as a powerful device for motivating students.

The second stage of the rhetorical curriculum as it developed in the second century CE was the study of issues (Greek *stasis* [στάσις], Latin *status*): that is, one learned how to distinguish different themes for declamation or real forensic or deliberative oratory, not according to the category of the alleged crime (theft, homicide, and so on), but according to the nature of the dispute arising from the allegation: was it a dispute about a matter of fact, or definition, or what? In the system that stabilised towards the end of the second century, there were thirteen issues, and students were taught a default strategy for handling each of them.<sup>20</sup> Despite its highly technical nature, issue-theory was not beyond any possibility of being connected to Homer. In the second century CE the large and varied output of Telephus of Pergamum included a work in two books identifying the “seeds” of rhetoric in Homer, which allegedly covered *inter alia* the thirteen issues. Since there are chronological grounds for doubting whether Telephus himself could have referred to thirteen issues, the number is likely to be an unwittingly anachronistic gloss introduced after thirteen had become the canonical number of issues.<sup>21</sup> Telephus was, in any case, a grammarian, not a rhetorician. The technical terminology which is found in the occasional traces of discussion of issue-theory preserved in the Homeric scholia has something in common with the sparse evidence for Athenaeus, a contemporary of Hermagoras of Temnos in the second century BCE; it is certainly not the terminology of what emerged as the canonical form of issue theory in the course of the second century CE. In the commentary tradition, therefore, grammarians apparently failed to update obsolete rhetorical theory.<sup>22</sup> The sense that in this sub-discipline Homeric exegesis and rhetor-

19 See Heath (2004) 226, 247–248; Cribiore (2007) 149. But she mistakenly conflates refutation (*anaskueē*) with *antirrḗsis* in Theon: see Heath (2002/3) 151–153.

20 On the development of issue-theory in this period see Heath (2004) 4–36; Heath (2007) provides a practical introduction.

21 The testimonium is in Rabe (1931) 189.3–7. See Heath (2004) 19 n.23 for the chronological doubts.

22 Heath (1993) 356–360. The issue arising from outcome of the duel between Paris and Menelaus in *Iliad* 3 is identified as letter and intent in the scholia (AbT *Il.* 3.457). That is

ical theory were disconnected is reinforced by the absence of any reference to Homer in the standard textbook, Hermogenes *On Issues*.<sup>23</sup> Admittedly, that text's methodology means that it has very few citations; but, for comparison, Demosthenes is cited six times.

In studying issue-theory, students learned how to take a forensic or deliberative dispute and develop in outline a way of arguing a case on either side. The application of the theory was demonstrated and practised through the analysis of declamation themes. Among the many declamation themes mentioned in the scholia to Hermogenes *On Issues* and related texts, there is only one that is based on Homeric material: Odysseus kills the suitors and is charged with harming the public interest ([Aug.] *Rhet.* 145.22–3 Halm).<sup>24</sup> Nor, indeed, are there many extant or attested declamations on Homeric themes by expert rhetoricians: Aristides composed an embassy speech to Achilles (*Or.* 52 Dindorf); Libanius wrote embassy speeches for Odysseus and Menelaus at Troy (*Decl.* 3–4), and a version of Achilles' reply to Odysseus' embassy speech in *Iliad* 9 (*Decl.* 5). It seems, then, that the progression from the progymnasmata and metaphrase to declamation involved a movement away from Homer.

The next stage in the curriculum was invention, in which students were taught how to transform outline strategies for arguing cases into fully worked speeches. One of the innovations of the second century CE was lifting the issues out of invention into a preliminary stage of analysis. But invention itself was still organised around the standard structure of a speech, which in this period consisted of four parts: prologue, narrative, argument, and epilogue. Accordingly, the first three books of pseudo-Hermogenes *On Invention* are devoted to prologue, narrative, and proofs respectively. Demosthenes is cited eight times in book 1, three times in book 2, and 16 times in book 3 (which also has 2 citations of Aeschines); there are no references to Homer. One might expect the epilogue to be treated next: in fact, there is no treatment of the epilogue. Book 4, which comprises approximately 35% of the whole, is largely concerned with style – primarily figures of speech to be used in articulating one's proofs. Here, too, Demosthenes is dominant, with 60 citations; but Homer, with 13 references, takes second place. Similarly, Homer (in company,

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correct if the question is whether the Trojans have broken their oath, but if the question is whether they are obliged to surrender Helen, then the terms of Paris's challenge are relevant, as well as those of the oath. Hence the issue is correctly identified as a conflict of law when two rhetoricians are invited at a symposium to apply their expertise to this problem in Plutarch *QC* 9.13. See Heath (1993) 360–363; Sluiter (2005).

23 Translation and commentary: Heath (1995). Text: Rabe (1913).

24 Sen. *Suas.* 3 (Agamemnon deliberates whether to sacrifice Iphigeneia) is not strictly Homeric.

of course, with prose authors) is a prolific source of examples in specialised handbooks on figures: between them, Tiberius, Alexander, Herodian, and Polybius amass 126 Homeric references.

Some of the Homeric citations in *On Invention* 4 merit closer attention. In three cases the illustrative force of a quotation depends on the omission or reordering of lines. To illustrate the effect of completing a sequence of thought with a comparison, pseudo-Hermogenes quotes *Iliad* 16.215–17, followed by 212–4 (191.9–19); the example would not work if the lines were given in the correct order. To illustrate *epiphōnēma* (ἐπιφώνημα, an additional remark used to round off an argument or description) he refers to a passage in *Odyssey* 5 in which Poseidon raises a storm: “for example, ‘East wind and South wind and the ill-blowing West wind clashed together, and the North wind, born in clear sky, rolling a great wave,’ and ‘in clouds he hid the earth and sea’. Up to this point there is the description (*diatupōsis* [διατύπωσις]), but the rest, ‘night rose from the heavens’, is an *epiphōnēma*” (197.2–7). Again, the lines are quoted out of order, with 295–6 preceding 293–4: so the concluding lines of the description have been placed before the purported *epiphōnēma*, which in Homer’s text comes in the middle of the description, not as an addition at the end. In the third case, pseudo-Hermogenes shows how Homer maintains solemnity in his description of Tyro’s encounter with Poseidon by being explicit about what preceded and what followed the crucial act, but not about the act itself: “He loosed her maiden girdle, and shed sleep upon her; and she, having conceived ...” (201.11–202.2). Yet in the text of Homer these two lines (*Od.* 11.245, 254) are separated by eight intervening lines in which the shameful act is explicit (“but when the god had finished deeds of love ...”). Was pseudo-Hermogenes’ recollection of the text so fragile? Or was he deliberately using Homeric lines to construct an example that the text itself failed to supply? A later commentator draws attention to all three errors (*RG* 7.830.24–832.8, 842.25–843.7, 850.12–15 Walz). He assumes that the modifications were deliberate (843.8–11), but disapproves of the procedure. In the second case, he thinks that the modification was unnecessary: *Odyssey* 5.291–4 would provide a satisfactory illustration (843.28–845.2).<sup>25</sup> In the third case, he concedes that the passage could only provide an illustration of solemnity in its doctored form (850.18–851.18). His fundamental view, however, is that modified examples should be used, if at all, openly: that is, one should quote the example in both its original and its modified form. But (he observes) that might give the impression that

25 His quotation omits 293b–294a: but the illustration does not depend on this omission. It does, however, depend on the omission of 295–6: it remains true that in Homer’s text the purported *epiphōnēma* comes in the middle of the description, not at the end.

the technique is not used by any classical model: why else would one rely on an adaptation? So if one's chosen example needs modification, it would be better to abandon it and find another one that does not need to be modified (7.830.24–832.8). One might argue that, if one is teaching rhetorical theory rather than Homer, adapted examples are just as good. Adapting them from Homeric materials allows you to retain the poet's prestige, provided that your students do not know the original well enough to recognise the modifications (and if we are willing to entertain the possibility that pseudo-Hermogenes himself could not remember the Homeric text accurately, then it is even more likely that his students could not). An anonymous author on figures notes that pseudo-Hermogenes manufactured his example of *epiphōnēma* (a point which he says he has discussed in his commentary on *On Invention*), but lets it stand on the grounds that it is not always easy to find suitable examples (RG 3.116.21–4 Spengel). It is salutary to be reminded that the factors that must be taken into account when we are trying to understand the activities of busy professionals include pragmatic considerations of economy of effort.

The impression that treatises on invention had relatively little interest in Homer is supported by the evidence of related texts. In the Anonymus Seguerianus, the beginning of Nestor's speech in *Iliad* 1 provides an example of how to get an audience's attention by advertising one's record as a successful adviser to important people (§14); some features of Homeric style are mentioned as things to avoid if you want to be concise (§69–71); and the sizzling demise of the Cyclopes' eyeball provides an example of onomatopoeia (§86, quoting *Od.* 9.394). In the treatise attributed to Apsines, the simile comparing Hector to a stallion is used as an illustration of *parabolē* (279.20–281.1 Spengel-Hammer, quoting *Il.* 15.263); Homer does achieve prominence, however, in the section on ways to excite pity in the epilogue, where he is cited six times (314.12–316.3, 317.1–8, 318.8–11). One of the citations comes from Phoenix's description of the sack of a city (317.3–4, quoting *Il.* 9.593–4), which we have already met as an inspiration for metaphrase by Demosthenes and Aeschines.

More advanced aspects of stylistic theory are addressed in the fourth text in the standard corpus, Hermogenes *On Types of Style*. As we might expect, Homer makes a stronger showing here than in the non-stylistic parts of works on invention. Demosthenes is, of course, overwhelmingly dominant, with more than 450 citations. But there are 40 quotations from Homer, ranging in length from a single word to three consecutive lines. However, given the length of this text that is not an exceptionally high density of Homeric references: on my very rough estimate, the density is about the same as in Aphthonius' and Nicolaus' *Progymnasmata*, and a long way short of book 4 of pseudo-Hermogenes *On Invention*.

The final work in the standard corpus, pseudo-Hermogenes *On Method*, is the only text that exceeds pseudo-Dionysius' second essay on figured speeches in its density of Homeric citations. In fact, there is clearly a relationship between this text and pseudo-Dionysius, though no one has produced a compelling argument about what that relationship is.<sup>26</sup> The shared material on figured speeches partly accounts for the density of Homeric reference; but much of it is due to a focus on style. For example, Homer provides four illustrations of *epanalēpsis* (ἐπαναλήψις) (9, 423.14–4.11). But Demosthenes supplies five further illustrations, and Xenophon and Herodotus are also mentioned. So this author's liking for multiplying examples, together with his conciseness, are further factors in the unusual density of Homeric references in this text.

## 5 Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from this survey? Rhetoricians do make use of Homer in teaching rhetorical techniques. This use is primarily illustrative of stylistic or of local tactical devices, rather than of larger-scale structures or strategies of argument. Accordingly, it is unevenly distributed across rhetorical sub-disciplines. It is relatively frequent in works on style, but totally absent in works on issues – not because no contact could be made with Homeric speeches, but because the highly technical theory taught in this period was too remote from the informal, traditional rhetoric found in Homer for that contact to be useful. Similarly, Menander, a commentator on Demosthenes whose main interest is the analysis of the argument, barely refers to Homer. Extended analysis of whole speeches or debates in Homer is very rare: the case of pseudo-Dionysius on figured speech is exceptional. By contrast, one-line illustrations are very frequent. Unfortunately, we cannot judge how far those served as prompts for more expansive oral exposition on the part of teachers, or for recollection and reflection on the part of students. There is clear evidence that the rhetoricians took for granted some knowledge of Homer; that knowledge was part of what made him a useful source of illustrations, where he is able to provide them. There is also evidence for some enthusiasm for Homer, or at least for recognition of his authoritative status. If the use of Homeric subject-matter in progymnasmata and emulation of Homer in metaphor are significant, that enthusiasm and respect may have been exploited more in exercises than in formal instruction; but when we come to declamation, engagement with Homeric material is absent from student practice

<sup>26</sup> Heath (2003) 98–100.

pieces. Yet Homer retained a place in stylistic tuition. He could not simply be forgotten. When the rhetorician's students emerged from their rigorous technical training, they would operate (whether as sophists or as advocates) in a social context in which markers of elite status carried weight.<sup>27</sup> To practice at the highest level, they needed to share the common cultural capital of the elite, of which – as other chapters in this volume show – Homer remained a vital part.

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27 Heath (2004) 321–33.

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## Homer in the Second Sophistic

Lawrence Kim

Homer was such a fundamental part of Greek education, literature, and culture under the Roman Empire that any attempt to concisely chart his Second Sophistic reception requires setting some parameters. In this chapter I restrict my survey to the major ‘sophistic’ authors of the late-first to the mid-third century CE – Aelius Aristides, Dio of Prusa, Lucian, Maximus of Tyre, and Philostratus – with an occasional glance at other Imperial writers like Aelian, Athenaeus, Galen, and Polyaeus.<sup>1</sup> Even within this limited group, the sheer quantity of material is overwhelming. Dio’s corpus alone includes short essays and dialogues entitled *On Homer*, *On Homer and Socrates*, *Chryseïs*, and *Agamemnon* (Orr. 53, 55, 61, 62) as well as long speeches devoted either entirely to Homer, like his *Second Kingship* and *Trojan* orations (Orr. 2, 11) or in part, like his *Olympian* (Or. 12.55–83). Four of Maximus’ orations take Homer as their topic (Orr. 4, 17, 18, 26), Aristides’ *Embassy Speech to Achilles* (Or. 16) ‘rewrites’ *Iliad* 9, and large sections of Books 1 and 5 of Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophists* explore Homeric banquets in elaborate detail. Lucian’s *True History* and Philostratus’ *Heroicus* follow Dio’s *Trojan* in ‘revising’ Homer, while several of Philostratus’ *Imagines* (e.g., 1.1, 1.8, 2.7) explore, as in Dio’s *Olympian*, the relation between Homer’s poetry and the visual arts. Yet even this list excludes a host of significant discussions of Homer and his poetry made in passing by these authors. In this chapter, however, I want to avoid focusing too closely on such ‘Homeric’ works or passages; instead, I examine the more general deployment of and reference to Homer by these writers across their corpora, in order to better demonstrate how profoundly Homer’s influence penetrated Imperial sophistic discourse. To do so, I concentrate on describing and discussing the variety of Homeric citational practices that are characteristic of sophistic authors as a group, before turning to some specific examples of more extended and

1 For a brief overview of Imperial Greek approaches to Homer, see Kim (2010) 4–21; cf. Zeitlin (2001) and the essential study of Kindstrand (1973) on Dio, Aristides, and Maximus. Hunter (2018) is selective and thematically arranged, but vividly conveys the range and depth of the interest in Homer in antiquity, including the Imperial era. For studies of individual authors and texts, refer to the works cited in the notes below.

sophisticated ‘citations’ of Homeric poetry from Dio’s *Nestor* (*Or.* 57) and *First Tarsian Oration* (*Or.* 33) and Lucian’s dialogue *Charon*.

1        **Homeric Citations in Second Sophistic Authors**

The remarkable number of times that Homer and his poetry are mentioned in Imperial Greek literature can be seen in the following chart, which lists, for eight authors active from the late first to the early third centuries CE, the amount and frequency of Homeric citations (C.) – comprising explicit references or clear allusions to Homer or Homeric poetry – and the subset of those citations that are direct Homeric quotations (Q.).<sup>2</sup>

Author	Words	Homer C.	C./1000 words	Homer Q.	Q./1000 words
Maximus of Tyre	68,500	298	4.35	141	2.06
Athenaeus	288,500	n/a	–	445	1.54
Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>	545,000	n/a	–	751	1.38
Dio of Prusa	160,000	330	2.06	99	0.62
Lucian	280,000	488	1.74	165	0.59
Aristides	300,000	322	1.07	153	0.51
Aelian, <i>NA</i>	107,000	95	0.89	36	0.34
Epictetus	80,000	40	0.50	19	0.24

2 Throughout this article, the terms ‘citation’ and ‘quotation’ are used in accordance with these definitions; I also use ‘reference’ as a synonym for ‘citation’. Word counts (rounded) are taken from the TLG-Online. Plutarch is included as a comparandum; his reception of Homer is treated elsewhere in this volume. Figures for Maximus are taken from Kindstrand (1973) 49–59; for Dio, Kindstrand (1973) 19–31 (not including *Or.* 11 or the centoes in *Or.* 32 – the word count is therefore an estimate; for alternative statistics, cf. Gangloff (2006b) 103)); for Lucian, Householder (1941) (not including inscriptions or passages from other authors quoted by Lucian; see Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) 378–411 for slightly different figures); for Athenaeus, Olson (2012) s.v. Homer (similar figures in Bréchet (2007) 328); for Plutarch’s *Moralia*, Helmbold and O’Neill (1959), 39–48 (for different estimates see Ziegler (1964) cols. 277–8 (lower) and Bréchet (2004–5) 190 (higher)); for Aristides, Kindstrand (1973) 77–87; for Aelian, Kindstrand (1976); and for Epictetus, Muckensturm-Pouille (2012).

The high numbers of quotations are even more impressive when compared to the relative paucity of references to other poets or prose authors: for instance, Homer accounts for over seventy-five percent of Dio's quotations of poetry and fifty-five percent of Lucian's, and in fact, over forty percent of references to *all* literary sources in Lucian are Homeric (Plato comes in a distant second at six percent).<sup>3</sup> And in nearly every author listed above, citations of Homer far outnumber those of his nearest competitors: Euripides among poets, Plato and Demosthenes among prose writers.<sup>4</sup>

There are two primary reasons for the prevalence of Homer in Imperial oratory. First, the authority and respect he commanded as the best and most ancient Greek poet meant that Homer's verses were not only considered aesthetically exceptional, but also reputed to contain profound wisdom concerning the divine, human, and natural worlds. Of equal importance, however, was his poetry's foundational position in the Greek educational curriculum. As the author of the late second-century CE *On Homer* attributed to Plutarch explains: "It is appropriate that Homer, who in time was among the first of poets and in power was the very first, is the first we read" (B1).<sup>5</sup> An orator could thus count on the fact that nearly every member of his audience would have had some familiarity with Homeric poetry;<sup>6</sup> moreover, because Homer also served as a primary model and source of examples at subsequent stages of a student's grammatical and rhetorical training,<sup>7</sup> any elite listener or reader could be presumed both to have a relatively detailed knowledge of Homer and to be conversant with basic interpretations of well-known lines of his poetry. As a result, references to the gods and heroes, to individual episodes and stories, and to specific verses of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* collectively functioned as a supplementary 'language' with which an author or speaker could convey meaning to their audience.<sup>8</sup>

This language, however, was not uniformly or consistently employed; while the overall frequency of Homeric citations is quite high, a look at the chart

3 On Dio see Gangloff (2006b) 103; on Lucian, Householder (1941) 41.

4 The exception is Aristides, who cites Plato slightly more often than Homer (due to the hundreds of Platonic references in *Or. 2 To Plato: In Defense of Oratory* and *Or. 3 To Plato: In Defense of the Four*).

5 Cf. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 11.4; Ael. *NA* 16.25.

6 Cf. Dio's remarks on the dissemination of Homer's poetry to India (*Or.* 53.7) and the intimate knowledge of the *Iliad* professed by the isolated Borysthenites on the north coast of the Black Sea (*Or.* 36.9).

7 Homer plays a prominent role in education-oriented treatises like Plutarch's *On Listening to Poetry*, Dio's *On the Practice of Discourse* (*Or.* 18), and Book 10 of Quintilian's *Oratorical Institutes*.

8 Cf. Desideri (1978) 469–480 on Dio.

reveals that certain authors (Maximus, Athenaeus, Plutarch, Dio, and Lucian) refer to Homer significantly more often than others (Aristides, Aelian, and Epictetus).<sup>9</sup> Individual predilections and familiarity no doubt played a role here, but genre may have been a more important factor. Citing Homer was more appropriate for certain kinds of sophistic texts that called for a more relaxed style – diatribes, encomia, dialogues, *belles lettres*, pedagogical or proreptic treatises, and speeches made to a broader public – than for more formal types of discourse, such as political speeches, ‘serious’ philosophical or technical treatises, or narrative (whether historical, fictional, or biographical).

The frequency and regularity of Homeric citation by Maximus, for example, can be attributed to the fact that his *Discourses* are introductory lectures on moralizing and popular philosophizing topics – precisely the type of work in which one would expect to find appeals to Homer.<sup>10</sup> Dio’s fondness for the poet is similarly explained by the ‘Homer-friendly’ bent of his corpus: e.g., festival and city speeches addressed to a general public (*Orr.* 11, 12, 32, 33, 35) and numerous informal treatises on miscellaneous topics – short dialogues with students, prelude-speeches, and belle-lettristic essays (of which several are devoted to Homeric topics: *Orr.* 53, 55–57, 61). But when Dio addresses local political matters before the smaller elite audiences in city councils (*Orr.* 31, 34, 38–51), he almost never mentions Homer.<sup>11</sup> This variation in Homeric citation according to genre and audience is found also in Aristides, who cites Homer regularly in the ‘minor’ speeches, which include prose hymns to various gods (*Orr.* 37–46) as well as occasional and encomiastic orations (*Orr.* 26–34). In his ‘major’ works, however, he is more reticent: allusions or references to Homer appear rarely in the extremely long *Panathenaic Oration* (*Or.* 1) and almost never in his historical declamations set in the classical period (*Orr.* 5–15). And when Homeric citations occur in the speeches defending rhetoric from Plato (*Orr.* 1–3), they tend to do so in bunches, isolated in individual sections.<sup>12</sup> One could thus argue that the discrepancy between the rates of Homeric citation in Maximus, Dio, and Aristides (high, relatively high, less high) is primarily due to the relative percentage of Homerically-inappropriate ‘political’ or ‘serious’ texts in their corpora: none for Maximus, a few for Dio, and a considerable

9 Kindstrand (1973) 221–229 compares the Homeric reception of Dio, Aristides, and Maximus; more work of this kind is needed.

10 On Homer and Maximus, see Kindstrand (1973); Szarmach (1985), 45–51; Heath (2013) 150–162; Daouti (2016).

11 Gangloff (2006b) 107–110.

12 See Miletta (2015) on the ‘Homeric section’ of Aristid. *Or.* 28.25–50; cf. *Or.* 36.104–12.

number for Aristides.<sup>13</sup> When we speak of Homer's ubiquity and continuous presence in Imperial sophistic literature, we should remember that, despite the familiarity that made Homer such a useful tool for communication, invoking his poetry was not always appropriate; knowing precisely in which situations and to which audiences one ought to play one's Homeric cards was essential to a sophist's success.

### 1.1 *Decorative and Comparative Citations*

When Homeric 'language' was deployed, it was often to embellish and ennoble one's discourse – what I will call 'ornamental' or 'decorative' citation.<sup>14</sup> For example, when Aelian notes at *NA* 1.43 that eating nightingales keeps one from "sleep, the king of gods and men" (*Il.* 14.233), or when Maximus quotes *Il.* 4.450 ("Where rose the groans and prayers of men") to describe life in a prison (*Or.* 36.4), each author adds a certain vividness to his description as well as a hint of erudition, but not much by way of substantive content.<sup>15</sup> The use of ornamental citations like these varies considerably depending on the author: they are almost completely absent in Dio and Epictetus, occasional in Aelian (about one-fifth of his citations), but constitute a relatively large percentage of Aristides' and Maximus' total Homeric references.<sup>16</sup>

13 Genre partly accounts for the high figures of Athenaeus and Plutarch as well: the former's sympotic miscellany is peppered with thousands of poetic and prose quotations, while the latter's *Moralia* consists of moral essays, dialogues, and other belle-lettristic texts (by comparison, there are far fewer references to Homer in the biographical/narrative *Lives*). Lucian's use of Homer is a bit more complicated. While the satirical and informal nature of his corpus suits his propensity for Homeric citation, Lucian tends to *quote* Homer more frequently in certain types of texts: (a) those centered on the gods or the underworld (e.g., *Zeus the Tragic Actor*, *Icaromenippus*, *Charon*: thirty-two quotations in these three alone); (b) encomia, like *Imagines* and *Pro Imaginibus*, or (c) 'technical' treatises, like *On Dancing* and *On the Parasitic Art* (this last satirical) that devote a section to 'Homeric' precedents (cf. *Runaways*, where all eight quotations of Homer appear in a single paragraph (30)). Overall, sixty-five percent of Lucian's quotations of Homer (106 of 162) occur in just fifteen works (out of around eighty, i.e., less than twenty percent); figures according to Householder (1941) 46–50. For a similar distribution of Lucian's Homeric references, see the chart in Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) 378–388.

14 Cf. Kindstrand (1973) 36: *schmückende Zitate*; Gangloff 2006, 114: *fonction ornamentale*.

15 A variation, extremely common in Maximus, involves embellishing a reference to a Homeric episode with a direct quotation. For instance, in order to make a point about memory (*Or.* 10.7), he mentions how Odysseus weeps when Demodocus sings "Of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, the son of Peleus" (*Od.* 8.75); the Homeric verse provides no additional information or support to Maximus' argument.

16 Kindstrand (1973) 109 and on Aelian (1976) 48. Lucian, too, appears to favor ornamental citations.

Of course, when properly contextualized, a decorative Homeric allusion could evoke associations that lent it greater resonance. One common variant occurs when the speaker, rather than merely quoting a Homeric line to augment a description, explicitly *compares* something to Homeric precedent.<sup>17</sup> Consider the following example from Aristides' *Or.* 30, *Birthday Speech to Apellas*: "I seem to feel a kind of lightness, just as Diomedes, as described by Homer, had his limbs made light [*Il.* 5.122] and his sight made clear by Athena, and I cannot restrain myself for joy" (*Or.* 30.26). By likening his joy to Diomedes' divinely bestowed 'lightness', Aristides does not just provide a rhetorical flourish to his description; the variety of qualities called to mind by the allusion – divine inspiration, quickness of movement, clarity of vision – lends a greater complexity to Aristides' statement, not to mention casting Aristides himself in the mold of a Homeric hero.<sup>18</sup> A more extended example is Maximus's reference to Agamemnon's rousing and marshalling of the Greek troops (*Il.* 4.297–9) in order to illustrate how the soul recollects memories (*Or.* 10.6). The comparison concretizes the abstract philosophical argument and provides a vivid image of the process at hand.

The ease with which quotations from Homeric poetry could be recalled and deployed in various contexts and the profound familiarity on the part of speaker and audience such activity presupposes are vividly illustrated by several episodes of *extempore* Homerizing found in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Herodes Atticus, when the emperor Marcus Aurelius had asked him his opinion of the sophist Polemo of Laodicea's oratorical style, responds by quoting *Il.* 10.535: "The sound of swift-footed horses strikes upon my ears" (*VS* 539, 1.74.12 Stefec). Polemo too could play this game; chosen to lead an embassy from Smyrna instead of the aging Scopelian of Clazomenae, he paid homage to his colleague by embracing him in front of the assembly and quoting Patroclus' words to Achilles in *Il.* 16.40–41 – "Give me your harness to buckle around my shoulders, if by chance they should mistake me for you" (*VS* 521, 1.58.3 Stefec). The most famous example in the *Lives* of such self-conscious Homeric role-playing is probably that of Dio in exile, who upon

17 Kindstrand (1973) 34: *Zitate als Vergleiche*.

18 Comparisons could also be made at a Homeric hero's expense; in the same speech Aristides exclaims: "Nor would Nestor, although an old man, still seem to speak like 'honey', if he were compared to this boy" (*Or.* 30.19).

19 No comprehensive study of Homeric citation by Philostratus exists; for the *Imagines*, see Newby (2009) 326–331 and Webb (2015); for the *Vit. Soph.*, Favreau-Linder (2013); for *Heroicus*, Grossardt (2006) 99–102; and for *Apollonius*, Bowie (2009), which lists the quotations, Dijk (2009), an idiosyncratic treatment of the *Odyssey* citations, and Grossardt (2009), focusing on 4.11–16.

hearing of Domitian's death leapt up on a high altar and began an impromptu speech with *Od.* 22.1: "Then Odysseus *polymêtis*, stripped off his rags ..." (*VS* 488, 1.14.4 Stefec). Note the sophistication presumed by these anecdotes: the sophists produce on the spot yet *apropos* Homeric quotations that elevate and ennoble their discourse, while readers and audiences are expected to catch the reference to Homer (who is never mentioned by name) and, if skilled enough, to appreciate the evocation of the quotation's original context.

A final point: citations of Homer could allude not only to particular passages of his poetry, but also to *interpretations* of the lines in question. By way of illustration, take the concluding words of the preface to Philostratus' *Lives*: "This essay of mine, best of proconsuls, will help to lighten the weight of cares on your mind, like Helen's cup with its Egyptian *drugs*" (ὥσπερ ὁ κρατὴρ τῆς Ἑλένης τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις *φαρμάκοις*: *VS* 480, 1.1.4 Stefec). The allusion is to the celebrated episode in the *Odyssey* where Helen assuages the sorrow felt by Telemachus, Menelaus, and Pisistratus in recalling the Trojan War and its aftermath (*Od.* 4. 219–21):

Then Helen, born of Zeus, thought of another thing  
and immediately threw a *drug* (*φάρμακον*) into the wine which they were  
drinking,  
*pain-relieving*, anger-calming, and making one forget all evils.  
(*νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον πάντων*)

As in the 'comparative' citations of Aristides and Maximus mentioned above, Philostratus' reference illuminates and enriches his meaning, drawing a comparison between himself and Helen, and between his work – the *Lives* – and Helen's wondrous 'drug', or *φάρμακον*. But in this case, the analogy is an adaptation of a critical interpretation of the *Odyssey* passage. Plutarch has one of his characters in *Table Talk* explain (*Quaest. conv.* 1.1 614C):

For, while they were drinking, Helen relates the story of Odysseus [quotation of *Od.* 4. 240 and 242 follows].<sup>20</sup> That, in my opinion, was the 'pain-relieving' (*νηπενθές*) and care-dissolving 'drug' (*φάρμακον*) – namely, the *story* (*λόγος*), one appropriate to the circumstances and their suffering at the time.

Philostratus' reference to the palliative powers of drugs (*φάρμακον*) and discourse (*λόγος*) thus carries even more resonance, evoking not just Helen's

<sup>20</sup> These were also famous lines; see below on their use in Dio Chrys. *Or.* 33.



‘pain-relieving’ wine additive, but the ‘pharmaceutical’ powers attributed to her subsequent narrative by the critical tradition.<sup>21</sup>

At the most basic level, then, decorative citations of Homer’s poetry provide pleasing stylistic variation, enhance the literary credentials of the author, and offer the audience the satisfaction of recognizing a well-known line. But orators could also use the verses – and occasionally the interpretations of those verses – to draw a comparison between Homeric and contemporary characters, situations, and sentiments and thereby bestow a greater weight and allusive complexity upon their discourse.

### 1.2 *Homeric Authority: Corroborating and Contestatory Citations*

To achieve their proper effect, decorative citations rely on an audience’s familiarity with Homer, their perception of his high literary status, and the elevated tone of his language. But Homer’s poetry was also cited for the value of its *content*; his verses were widely held to express fundamental truths about the gods, the natural world, and the human condition.<sup>22</sup> Maximus, for instance, insists that Homer’s poetry lays out “a lucid theology, an account of political forms, and an account of human virtues and vices and experiences and disasters and successes” (*Or.* 26.4), while Ps.-Plutarch goes even further: “[Homer] was adept at every kind of wisdom and skill and provides the starting points and, so to speak, the seeds of all kinds of discourse and action for those who come after him, not only for the poets but for writers of prose as well, both historical and speculative” (*Vit. Hom.* B7).<sup>23</sup> Homer could thus be cited not just for literary, or decorative purposes, but as an *authoritative* source of wisdom and knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Homer’s authority, however, was far from absolute. While every Imperial author I treat in this chapter held Homer in the highest regard, none of them considered his words as the unquestioned, gospel truth. Rather, they tend to use Homeric citations as *corroborating* testimony to support or confirm their

21 For other interesting references to these lines, cf. Aristid. *Sacred Tales* 1.2 (with Downie (2013) 52–5)) and Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12.52.

22 The sentiment had its origins in the classical era: cf. Pl. *Resp.* 598e and 606e; Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.2–3 and *Symp.* 3.5. Nearly half a millenium later, Dio can take it as a given that “everything [Homer] wrote is beneficial and useful” (ὅτι δὲ καὶ ὠφέλιμα πάντα καὶ χρήσιμα ἔγραψε: *Or.* 53.11). Buffière (1956) is the standard overview of the topic.

23 On Ps.-Plutarch, see Hillgruber (1994) and Lamberton (2002). Cf. Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 1.

24 Moreover, Homer was often presumed to have wanted to convey, or ‘teach’, this knowledge to his audience. See Marrou (1956) 9–13 and, for ancient didactic criticism in general, Russell (1981) 84–98. Cf. Sluiter (1999) 178–179 on the scholia, where Homer is often referred to as consciously ‘teaching’ grammar and rhetoric.

own already stated and independently derived claims about the matter at hand.<sup>25</sup> Consider Aristides' justification for using Homer as a witness regarding the importance of 'concord' (*homophrosunê*) (*Or.* 24.7):

I think that you would all concur that, just as you believe those courtroom arguments to be most truthful which have the most and best-known witnesses (πλείστοι καὶ γνωριμώτατοι μάρτυρες), so also in matters of advice (εἰς συμβουλὴν) the most trust must be shown to that which has the most and worthiest witnesses (πλείστοι καὶ σπουδαιότατοι μάρτυρες). Therefore refer back to Homer, the common adviser and patron of the Greeks (τὸν κοινὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων σύμβουλον καὶ προστάτην) ...

Aristides' subsequent quotation of Odysseus' praise of 'concord' between a man and his wife (*Od.* 6.182–5), however, is only one piece of evidence offered by him in a much larger argument about the general importance of that virtue.<sup>26</sup> So too when Maximus backs up his claim that *daimones* are of varied natures by citing *Od.* 17.485–6 ("For indeed the gods, in the guise of strangers from abroad || taking all manner of forms, visit the cities of men": *Or.* 8.8), or when Dio quotes *Od.* 17.423, "men possessing these [riches] ... are *called* [rather than actually being] wealthy", to endorse his own view that riches are not important (*Or.* 77/78.16), Homer functions only as a *supporting* witness (albeit one highly respected and extremely well-known), called to the stand by writers and speakers trying to persuade their audience of a particular argument's validity.<sup>27</sup>

Often, however, our authors seem less interested in the 'proof' value of Homeric testimony than in its use as a rhetorical device – to capture an

25 One exception is the use of Homeric poetry as a historical source, whether for the customs or practices of his own time, or, if one believed that he had accurate information about the heroic age, that of the Trojan War. Writers that cite Homer for this purpose, however, are not appealing to his wisdom, but to his *age*. Homer was the oldest, and hence most authoritative testimony: e.g., Pausanias cites Homer (*Il.* 23.141ff.) as an ancient witness to the practice of dedicating a lock of hair to rivers (Paus. 1.37.3), Galen to the obsolete meanings that certain words had in early Greece (MorauX (1987)), and Athenaeus to heroic dining and drinking habits (Book 1.8e–19a; Heath (2000)). On this topic in general, see Kim (2010) 22–27; and 38–44 on Thucydides, whose *Archaeology* is probably the best-known example of this method.

26 The example also shows how Homeric alleged 'wisdom' or 'knowledge' could be expressed by his characters as well as in the poet's own voice.

27 In Aristides' prose hymns to various gods, however, Homer's testimony is more authoritative, since his poems, along with that of other poets and the mythic tradition constitute the only possible material for the orator to exploit.

audience's attention, initiate discussion, or exhibit one's familiarity with recondite, yet *apropos* Homeric verses. For instance, a judicious citation of Homer's thoughts on a particular subject was an ideal way to introduce a speech or essay: Maximus' *modus operandi* in many of his brief, popular-philosophical sermons is to lead with Homer's testimony before moving on to a more in-depth discussion (e.g., *Orr.* 9, 22–23, 35, 38–40). Dio also structures several of his dialogues as discussions of Homer's statements on various topics (e.g., *Orr.* 23, 56, 61, 74); a famous example is in his *First Kingship Oration*, where Dio submits *Il.* 2.205–6 to a detailed interpretation by way of introducing the topic of the ideal king (*Or.* 1.11–15; cf. also *Or.* 4.39–45). In treatises touching on *technai*, or 'arts', the inclusion of a section presenting examples or quotations from Homer agreeing with the author's opinion on the given subject is almost *de rigueur*: e.g., Homer's knowledge of military tactics in Polyaeus' *Stratagems* (*Strat.* 1. proem. 4–12), Homer's understanding of rhetoric's importance in Aristides' *Platonic Orations* (*Or.* 2.86–96; *Or.* 3.463–73), or Homer's praise of the eponymous *technai* of Lucian's *On Dancing* (*Salt.* 13; 23), *On Astrology* (*Astr.* 22–4), and *On the Art of the Parasite* (*Par.* 10; 44–7).<sup>28</sup> While these citations of Homer serve primarily to corroborate the writer's arguments, they also perform an important rhetorical function: showing off both the diligence with which the author has scoured Homer for relevant material and the ingenuity often required to 'prove' Homer's awareness of the given phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> One can observe this also in more 'scientific' treatises. When Aelian, for example, quotes *Il.* 17.674–5 ('like an eagle, whom men say sees most sharply of all winged creatures') to prove that Homer "knows" (σύνοιδε) that the eagle has the best vision of any bird,<sup>30</sup> or when Galen quotes *Il.* 13.506–7 to show that Homer "knows" (οἶδεν) that there is only one primary vein in the human body, the purpose seems to be to showcase the Imperial author's cleverness rather than the poet's erudition.<sup>31</sup>

28 Nesselrath (1985) 431–435 on Lucian's use of Homer in *Parasite*.

29 Establishing the relevance of a given citation could also demonstrate one's erudition, particularly if it required some exegetical finesse. For example, Polyaeus supports his claim that military stratagems are more effective than brute strength by invoking Homer, who, he says, states the same opinion in his phrase "ἢ δόλῳ ἢ ἐ βίῃφι" (e.g., *Od.* 9.406). The customary way to take these words would be "either by a trick or by force", which hardly helps Polyaeus' case; he thus interprets them in a considerably more tendentious manner, explaining: "For Homer does not recommend anything else but that we should employ stratagems and devices against our enemies, but if these fail, *only then* must one take a risk with physical strength" (*Strat.* praef.).

30 *NA* 1.42. Cf. *NA* 5.38: Homer "knows" (ᾔδει) that lions go to cattle folds at night (quoting *Il.* 11.172); and 4.6 on *Il.* 20.221.

31 *In Hipp. de nat. hom.* 139, 5–14.

Homer could also be cited as an authority in order to question or dispute his alleged wisdom and knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Such strategic *contestations* of Homeric authority boasted a venerable pedigree, dating back to the poet's earliest critics, Xenophanes and Heraclitus, in the sixth century BCE. Homer's most notorious opponent, however, was Plato, whose doubts concerning Homer's knowledge of 'technical' matters, theology, and ethics (notably in *Ion* and *Republic*) would have been familiar to most of the Imperial elite. Plato's influence is probably best seen in Maximus, who reveres Homer and calls him the first philosopher, but nevertheless disparages the "wholly naïve and archaic manner" in which the poet dealt with "medicine, chariot-racing, and military tactics" (*Or.* 18.8),<sup>33</sup> refuses to accept the validity of *Il.* 9.497 – "the gods themselves are pliant" (*Or.* 5.3) – and sternly critiques Odysseus' famous description, at *Od.* 9.2–11, of drinking, eating, and listening to song as the greatest joy (*euphrosynê*): "This is dismaying praise, most wise Odysseus, for a most vulgar form of pleasure ..." (*Or.* 22.2).<sup>34</sup> Others, though less philosophically inclined, could still find room for complaint. Aristides may have praised Homer's thoughts on concord in the passage cited above, but he also dedicates a long section of his *Egyptian Oration* to demonstrating Homer's lack of familiarity with Egyptian geography (*Or.* 36.104–12), adding the general rule that "poets are not satisfactory witnesses about matters needing such careful examination" (112).<sup>35</sup> Lucian, unsurprisingly, casts a skeptical eye on Homer's knowledge of divine matters: in *Zeus the Tragic-Actor* 39, for example, he has Damis assert that, while Homer may be a good poet, nobody would accept him as a 'truthful witness' (μάρτυρα ... ἀληθῆ) about the gods. And the centuries-old tradition of finding errors and inconsistencies in Homer's narrative is taken up by Dio in his *Trojan Oration* and Philostratus in his *Heroicus*, who use them to cast doubt on the traditional poetic account in order to clear out a space for their own 'true' stories of the Trojan War.

Despite their antagonistic stance toward Homer, these contestatory citations exploit the poet's widespread reputation for wisdom as much as their corroborative counterparts. Both types of citations demonstrate how useful Homer's perceived status as an authority could be for the rhetorical needs

32 Kindstrand (1973) 33; *polemische Zitate*.

33 A nod to Socrates' criticisms of these claims in Plato's *Ion* and *Republic*.

34 Both passages were first criticized by Plato (*Resp.* 364b and 390a–b respectively); the second in particular was much discussed in antiquity, on which Montiglio (2011) 95–100 and Hunter (2018) 92–110. As Kindstrand (1973) 108, points out, Maximus questions Homer's authority more often than other authors not only because he is a Platonist, but also because he actually *cares* when Homer says something that seems wrong.

35 Contrast Strabo's defense of Homer's knowledge of this topic at *Geog.* 1.2.29–30.

of a sophist or orator, whether or not they truly believed in the validity of his wisdom: to support an argument, clarify the issue at stake, or generate a discussion.<sup>36</sup> And just as decorative citations of Homer's verses relied on listeners' familiarity with their source poems to achieve their proper effect, so too with citations of his knowledge: a clever criticism or ingenious discovery of a nugget of Homeric wisdom would be all the more appreciated by an audience reared on his poetry.

### 1.3 *Homer and Paradigmatic Moralizing*

A few more words need to be said concerning the use of authoritative Homeric citations by writers discussing ethical behavior, an area in which the poet was considered especially insightful. I have already shown how the lines spoken by the poet or his characters could be taken as ethical pronouncements, to be mustered in support of one's own views (Aristides on *homophrosunê*) or disputed (Maximus on *euphrosunê*). The basic idea behind such a method – that Homer was intentionally 'instructing' his audience on proper behavior – also applied to a less obvious aspect of his poetry, the depictions of the characters.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, Homer was considered a master of portraying human behavior. Galen, who generally disparages the use of poets in argument other than as witnesses for things that have already been demonstrated (see above on supporting citations), praises Homer for his accurate renditions of emotion: when Homer portrays Odysseus' checking his anger at the maids, he is "clearly describing ... a battle of anger against reason in a wise man, the victory of reason and the obedience of anger to it" (*PHP* III.3.10, quoting *Od.* 20.5–22).<sup>38</sup> In addition to direct pronouncements about ethical matters, Homer can show how the passions work through his narrative – there is a paradigmatic or exemplary aspect to his descriptions.

A common method of moralizing argument, associated with Stoic and Cynic philosophical discourse, was therefore to employ Homeric characters and their actions as case-studies of general human behavior in order to illuminate a speaker's point; we have numerous examples in the work of Epictetus, Dio, and Maximus. But the latter two take the approach farther than the first, suggesting that Homer *consciously* constructed his narrative and characters *in order to* advise and instruct his audience. As Maximus puts it (*Or.* 18.8), Homer

36 Dio even suggests that poets are considered 'wise', not because they possess any profound knowledge, but because they reflect popular opinion: "[People] would not love [the poets] so much, nor praise them as wise, virtuous men speaking the truth, if poetry did not echo [the people's] sentiments nor express their very opinions" (*Or.* 7.99).

37 On the moralizing use of Homer in antiquity, see Buffière (1956) 307–342; 365–391.

38 De Lacy (1966); Weisser (2012).

wove “both good and bad together in his narrative, *so as to* help us grasp the former and avoid the latter”; at *Or.* 26.6 he provides some specific examples:

[In Homer’s depiction of the Trojans] you will see virtue and vice ranged against each other: the profligate Paris, the sober Hector; Paris the coward, Hector the hero. You can compare their marriages too: admirable versus pitiable, accursed versus acclaimed, adulterous versus legitimate.

In other words, individual Homeric characters should be understood as paradigms of certain kinds of ethical qualities – e.g., Paris of cowardice, Hector of sobriety – presented by Homer in order to teach us what those qualities are like and encourage us to emulate or avoid them. So too Dio claims that when Homer describes the Trojan Pandarus’ actions in *Il.* 4, he is speaking about “bribe-taking, impiety and folly in general” (*Or.* 55.19).<sup>39</sup> Conversely, when the poet narrates scenes like that of Nestor trying to quell the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles in *Il.* 1, he “is trying to give advice regarding prudence and generalship” (19). For Dio, Homer instructs his audience (11) by offering examples or paradigms (as suggested at 22: παραδειγμάτων) of these qualities and then indicating whether they are ‘good’ or ‘bad’.<sup>40</sup>

This method is on display in Dio’s *Second Kingship Oration* (*Or.* 2), a dialogue between Philip 11 and a young Alexander in which the latter insists that Homer’s poetry should be read didactically, particularly concerning the proper behavior for kings.<sup>41</sup> Alexander is not talking about explicit statements of opinion or advice. For example, when asked by Philip how a king’s home should be decorated, he replies, “with spoils and armor taken from the enemy”, citing Hector’s words (*Il.* 7.83) that he will “hang high” Achilles’ arms if he defeats him (*Or.* 2.34). The logic behind this appears to be that because Hector is a ‘good’ king, one can take his (intended) action as Homer’s ‘advice’ for what a good king should do. Similarly, Alexander takes Homer’s depiction of Diomedes reclining on a hard, ox-hide bed, with his spears planted butt-end in the ground (*Il.* 10.150–6: *Or.* 2.45), as evidence that “Homer seems a competent instructor for an education that may truthfully be described as heroic and kingly” (*Or.* 2.44). If heroes like Hector or Diomedes are taken as models

39 Paralleled in the scholia: cf. Sch. T ad *Il.* 4.88–9a1 on Pandarus and Dio’s comments on Asius’ *apeitheia* (55.16) with Sch. bT ad *Il.* 12.110.

40 See further, Kim (2008) 609–613.

41 E.g., *Or.* 2.48: “Homer is evidently declaring his own opinion as to what kind of nourishment is best, and what it is good for [...] he is giving instruction and advice as to how good men should take thought even for their table.” On Dio’s use of Homer in *Or.* 2, see also Fornaro (2003); Gangloff (2011).

of excellence, then whatever they are portrayed doing can be construed as Homer's 'instruction' or 'advice'. This paradigmatic view of Homeric characters and narrative is rarely made explicit, but it seems to lie behind the bulk of moralizing readings of Homer, in Dio, Maximus, and Athenaeus, among others.<sup>42</sup>

## 2 'Sophisticated' Homeric Citation

Let us now turn to several examples of sophistic texts that cite Homer in a sustained fashion not just to evoke a fleeting mood, validate an argument, or make a moralizing point, but to engage more profoundly and playfully with their source. I am not concerned here with the works devoted solely to Homer or Homeric characters that I listed at the beginning of this article, since many of these, such as Ps.-Plutarch's *On Homer*, Maximus' *Orr.* 17 and 26, and the bulk of Dio's Homeric speeches and dialogues, treat him primarily in the moralizing or authoritative ways outlined above.<sup>43</sup> Another important group that I will pass over (since I have treated them in detail elsewhere) consists of revisionist 'corrections' of Homer like Dio's *Trojan Oration* and Philostratus' *Heroicus*, both of which accuse Homer of misrepresenting the history of the Trojan War and, in the course of providing the 'truth', offer a wry and unexpected commentary on the place of Homer in Imperial thinking about history and fiction.<sup>44</sup> Instead, I will discuss a few other examples of sophistic Homeric reception, taken from works by Dio and Lucian in which Homeric references are combined, manipulated, and modified in subtle and unexpected ways.

42 The speaker in the first book of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, for instance, claims that "the poet disparages drunkenness by representing it as the means by which the Cyclopes, big as he is, is defeated by a tiny person." But he adds a further variation when he suggests that "Homer represents (ποιεῖ) maidens and women bathing guests in the conviction that passion and lack of self-control (οὔτε φλεγμονὴν οὔτε ἀκρασίαν) have no effect on men who have led good, modest (σωφρόνως) lives" (both *Ath.* 1.18 [10e]). Here, Homer shows how 'disciplined' his heroes are by 'inventing' a custom (royal maidens bathing heroic guests) that highlights their self-control. On Athenaeus and Homer more generally, see Bouvier (2007), Bréchet (2007), and Peigney (2014).

43 Cf. Dio's *Orr.* 2, 53, 55, 56 and 61; see Kim (2008) for further discussion.

44 Kim (2010) 85–139 (*Trojan*) and 175–215 (*Heroicus*); on the former, see also Kindstrand (1973) 141–162; Seeck (1990); Fuchs (1996); Hunter (2009); Scafoglio (2016); Porter (2018); on the latter, Beschornier (1999); Grossardt (2006); Hodkinson (2011) 59–101. Cf. *Luc. Gall.* 17 (interview with a rooster who is the reincarnation of the Trojan Euphorbus and therefore an eyewitness to the Trojan War) and Philostr. *Vit. Ap.* 4.11–16 (Apollonius' interview with the ghost of Achilles). A similar text is Aristid. *Or.* 16, an imaginary speech delivered to Achilles during the embassy in *Il.* 9 (see Kindstrand (1973) 215–219).

## 2.1 *Dio Chrysostom*

I begin with Dio's *Nestor* (*Or.* 57), a short speech which appears to have prefaced the re-performance, to a popular audience, of one of Dio's *Kingship Orations*.<sup>45</sup> Dio's opening question, "Why in the world do you suppose Homer caused Nestor to speak the following verses to Agamemnon and Achilles?" is followed by a quotation of *Il.* 1. 260–8, 273–4, in which Nestor tells the two princes: "in my time I have dealt with better men than you are and never once did they disregard me" (*Or.* 57.1). Dio disagrees with those who believe that "Homer has depicted Nestor as a braggart (ἄλαζόνα)" for saying such things. Rather, Nestor is appealing to his past success, as a physician would, in order to persuade his 'patients' to take his 'medicine' (2); when he calls his former peers 'better', he is not bragging, but trying to prick the swollen pride of Achilles and Agamemnon, just as a physician lances a boil (3). Dio's moralizing reading of Nestor's words is interesting in its own right, both for its negative characterization of Agamemnon and Achilles and its emphasis on Homeric intention – Dio insists that Homer did not put these words into Nestor's mouth "at random" (εἰκῇ: 8) or "by chance" (ἀπὸ τύχης: 9) – but it is only in the last few paragraphs that he reveals the reason for his excursus into Homeric criticism: it turns out that Dio himself is forestalling accusations of boasting, for reporting to his audience "the words we have spoken in the presence of the Emperor" (11).

Dio thus uses Nestor's example to show that it is acceptable to tout one's own past 'advising' success, but there is also an implicit correspondence between Nestor and Dio's addressees: just as Nestor's speech is intended to 'reduce the pride' (τοῦ φρονήματος ... καθελεῖν: 7) of Agamemnon and Achilles and 'cut down their vanity' (ὑφεῖναι τοῦ τύφου: 8), so should Dio's audience be prepared to take the forthcoming speech as directed at their own shortcomings as well. What had appeared initially like an erudite digression on Homeric criticism is revealed instead as a lesson in how to listen to Dio's impending speech. Dio is not merely pointing to a Homeric example appropriate to his own situation but conducting a sustained reading of a Homeric passage that ends up re-interpreting Nestor as a Dionian moralist *avant la lettre*. And with characteristic irony, Dio presents this self-flattering comparison to Nestor in the course of a speech arguing that he is *not* praising himself.

45 On *Or.* 57, see Gangloff (2006a) 136–144; for Dio and Nestor, Jouan (2001). On Dio and Homer in general, aside from the works already mentioned, see Montgomery (1901); Desideri (1978) 468–523; Drules (1998); Saïd (2000); Gangloff (2006a) 294–309; Vagnone (2016).



A similar self-reflective appropriation of Homer occurs at the beginning of Dio's *First Tarsian Oration* (*Or.* 33.11–22).<sup>46</sup> Here, however, Dio does not tackle a single passage, but strings together a series of Homeric references to more vividly drive home his point – that the Tarsians should embrace his criticisms of their faults. He begins, as often, by upending expectations; he has come, he explains, to rebuke the Tarsians rather than praise them as a 'sophist' would. To justify this decision, Dio invokes Homer, but as a *negative* model. Like the sophists, Homer praises practically everything, not just people, but "animals, plants, water, earth, armor, and horses" (11); Archilochus went to the other extreme, censuring everything, and it is he whom Dio chooses to emulate (12).<sup>47</sup>

As he develops the contrast between speakers who praise and those who criticize, Dio turns to the *Odyssey*. He opposes an unkempt, solitary, self-critical figure (transparently referring to himself) to men who flatter and deceive (the 'sophists'); these latter are described, using Eumaeus' words spoken of the suitors, as "youths with handsome cloaks and *chitons* whose hair is always sleek and faces beautiful" (*Od.* 15.332: *Or.* 33.14). The underlying suggestion of a correspondence here between Dio and Odysseus is made explicit a few lines later: Dio not only styles himself with Homeric verses used of Odysseus – "he casts round his shoulders sorry rags, in guise a slave, and steals into the wide-wayed town of corrupted men" (*Od.* 4.244–6) – but also declares that he means no harm to the Tarsians "of the sort that Odysseus then intended against the suitors" (15).<sup>48</sup> In the *Odyssey*, the quoted lines are spoken by Helen of Odysseus' going into *Troy*, but Dio takes them to refer to Odysseus' arrival on *Ithaca*, even modifying the last line for this purpose: Homer's *δυσμενέων* ('hostile men', which fits the Trojans) is replaced by *θρυστομένων* ('corrupted men', which better describes the suitors).<sup>49</sup> Dio's earlier analogy has taken a new turn: it is not just the sophists, but also the Tarsians, who are equated with the suitors and opposed to Dio, the self-styled Odysseus.

Later, however, Dio likens his arrival in Tarsus to that of the shabbily-dressed Odysseus at *Troy*, rather than *Ithaca* – thus reverting back to the 'correct' reading of the *Odyssey* passage he had so blithely misread a few paragraphs earlier. Dio directs his harsh gaze away from the 'sophists' and onto his audience, who expect constant praise because they are so proud of the beauty and resources of their city. *Troy* also, Dio observes, was known for its vast wealth and the

46 Cf. Baldi (2004) 33–35; Gangloff (2006a) 278–282; Bost-Pouderon (2006) 11.241–5. On *Or.* 33 in general, see Kim (2013) with bibliography.

47 On Homer considered as the master of praise, see Pernot (1993) 649–657.

48 The lines are also quoted by, among others, Max. Tyr. 15.9 and 34.9.

49 Dio's play with Homeric verses is best witnessed in the centoets at *Or.* 32.4 and 82–5, on which see D'Ippolito (2007) 77–82; Kasprzyk (2015); Tronchet (2016).

splendor of its surroundings and inhabitants: “a city that Homer declares all men call ‘rich-in-gold, rich-in-copper’” (19). “But because luxury and insolence came upon [the Trojans], and they thought they had no need of culture and sobriety, they have become the most unfortunate of men” (22); in fact “Homer says that it was by the counsel and judgement of Odysseus” that Troy was taken, a man who came from a small island, “of which the poet could only say by way of praise that it ‘pastured goats’” (19). Previously, we had seen Dio assimilating himself to the scolding Archilochus and the solitary, sordid Odysseus in opposition to the ever-praising Homer and the beautified suitors, both stand-ins for the flattering sophists. The Tarsians were also likened to the suitors, described as ‘corrupted’; here, however, they are cast as Trojans – full of pride, enamored of luxury, uncultured, and immoderate. In both cases, however, Dio has come, not to destroy or slaughter the Tarsians, but to point out their faults, and ‘cure’ their corruption and decadence. The themes and targets here are typical of Dio, as are the skill and panache with which he employs multiple Homeric citations and analogies to illuminate and give weight to his self-presentation.

## 2.2 *Lucian*

Lucian’s engagement with Homer is just as extensive as Dio’s, but quite different in emphasis.<sup>50</sup> Lucian is familiar with all of the basic uses of Homer – decorative, exemplary, authoritative (although he avoids its moralizing variety) – but has a singular love of exploiting the verse form of Homeric poetry: witness his numerous epic pastiches, as well as his centoes constructed from various Homeric lines.<sup>51</sup> Lucian also displays a particular interest in parodically exploring the possibilities of what we might call the ‘world-making’ power of Homeric verse.<sup>52</sup> For example, Lucian frequently ridicules and criticizes the Homeric gods for their ethical transgressions, but when he portrays them in his dialogues, much of the resultant humor arises from their ‘Homeric’ characterization. *Zeus Refuted*, for instance, begins with Zeus agreeing that Homer’s words concerning the Fates (*Il.* 20.336) are true and then entangling himself in all sorts of difficulties regarding his own free will (*Iupp. conf.* 1). Elsewhere, Lucian’s gods are comically hyper-aware of their Homeric representations. When Zeus is dissatisfied with Hermes’ prosaic attempts to assemble the gods in *Zeus the Tragic Actor*, he suggests that his son just quote the words Homer

50 For Lucian’s use of Homer, see Camerotto (1998) 175–190; Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) provides a series of detailed case-studies and Camerotto (1996) examines Lucian’s various references to Zeus’ ‘golden cord’ (*Il.* 8.18–27).

51 Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) 337–351.

52 Compare Lucian’s description at *Hist. conscr.* 8 of poets’ freedom (ἐλευθερία) to invent or embellish as much as they want.

used (*Iupp. trag.* 6); in the same dialogue, Aphrodite herself cites Homer as a witness (μάρτυρα) that she is “golden” (10), and Zeus recites *Il.* 8.5, which he calls his own “Homeric introduction” (14).<sup>53</sup> The conceit that Homer has ‘created’ the gods whom Lucian depicts – that they are, in a sense, literary characters who are comically trying to come to grips with ‘reality’ – applies to the heroes as well: compare Nireus and Thersites trading Homeric citations in their beauty contest in *Dialogues of the Dead* (*Dial. mort.* 30 (25)).

This fascination with Homeric characters having ‘lives’ separate from, yet still restricted by, their poetic form also informs the *True History*, perhaps Lucian’s most sustained literary transformation of Homer.<sup>54</sup> “Homer’s Odysseus” is invoked as a model in the preface (*Ver. hist.* 1.3) and the story, involving a sea-voyage to a series of islands with their fantastic inhabitants, has obvious affinities with Odysseus’ *Apologoi*. In Book 2, the multiple levels on which Lucian’s parodies of and homages to Homeric poetry work induce a sort of vertigo in the reader: not only does Lucian actually meet Homeric characters like Achilles, Thersites, and Menelaus on the Isle of the Blessed, witness a second abduction of Helen, and deliver a letter to Calypso from Odysseus, but he even interviews Homer himself, from whom he also obtains (and subsequently loses) a new epic, and by whom he is memorialized in an epigram inscribed on a pillar.

The best example, however, of Lucian’s playful attitude toward Homer and the creative force of his poetry is the dialogue *Charon, or, The Inspectors*. As it opens, we find the eponymous ferryman escorted by Hermes up to the world of the living to see what all of the fuss is about (*Cont.* 1–2).<sup>55</sup> In order to find a suitably high vantage point from which to survey humanity, Hermes suggests that they pile some mountains together, just as Homer’s Aloeadae set Mt. Ossa and Pelion on top of Olympus (*Od.* 11.305–6). When Charon asks how they might do this, Hermes replies that since Homer “made [or ‘depicted’] (πεποίηκε) the sky reachable with a couple of verses,” all they have to do is recite Homer’s lines and accomplish the task “poetically” (3–4). This joke, whereby reciting poetic lines ‘literalizes’ their contents, is repeated a bit later; when Charon complains that he can’t see anything, Hermes recites Athena’s words to Diomedes at *Il.* 5.127–8 – “I have taken away the mist from your eyes, that before now

53 Cf. *Timon* 35, where Hermes quotes his own words from *Il.* 15.202. On Lucian’s gods, see Branham (1989) 163–177.

54 Bompaire (1958) 669–672; Maeder (1992); Möllendorff (2000) *passim*; Zeitlin (2001) 241–247; Kim (2010) 140–174; ní Mheallaigh (2014) 245–261.

55 On Lucian’s use of Homer in *Charon*, see D’Ippolito (2007) 82–84; Charrière (2011).

was there, so that you may well recognize the god and the mortal” – and voilà! Charon can see (7).

When Charon subsequently reveals that he too can recite Homer, Hermes expresses his surprise, and asks him when he could have had the time to read poetry. Charon relates that he had ferried Homer to the underworld; the poet began to recite a passage from *Od.* 7, describing a storm, and in the process brought an actual storm into existence, another testament to the literally ‘creative’ power of Homeric verse. But when Homer got seasick, he vomited up his verses (ἀπήμεσε τῶν ῥαψωδιῶν τὰς πολλάς), which are now imagined not only as generating reality, but as material objects themselves (7). Charon made sure to gather up as many as he could and now is himself able to pepper his conversation with Homeric verses, as he subsequently does in a series of parodic adaptations of *Il.* 3.226 (8–9) and two centoes – a brief one-liner (14) and a more ambitious five-liner (22) assembled from disparate lines of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

While the image of Charon greedily collecting Homer’s regurgitated poetry borders on the grotesque, it serves as a fitting and memorable metaphor not only for Lucian’s own satirical and parodic reappropriation of Homeric verse, but for the Imperial Greek practice of Homeric citation in general, the diversity and depth of which extends far beyond what I have been able to discuss in this article. Homer’s verses were collected, learned, and then redeployed for myriad purposes – moralizing, corroborating, illuminating, instructing, self-aggrandizing, etc. – and in connection with any number of subjects. Whether Imperial authors uttered his name or his verses with heartfelt reverence, exasperation, or with tongue in cheek, Homer remained a central reference point for any Imperial Greek with pretensions to *paideia*.

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## The Quest for Meaning: Homeric Quotations in Synesius of Cyrene and Libanius

*Aglæ Pizzone*

Mais il fallait commencer de parler de la citation sans s'arrêter au sens: le sens vient de surcroît, il est le supplément du travail [...] car le ressort du travail n'est pas une passion pour le sens, mais pour le phénomène, pour le *working* ou le *playing*, pour le manège de la citation. La lecture (solicitation et excitation) et l'écriture (réécriture) n'ont que faire du sens: elles sont manœuvres et manipulations, découpages et collages.<sup>1</sup>



In his work on the practice of quotation, *La seconde main* (1979), the literary theorist Antoine Compagnon underlines that quoting is a goal in itself, a process of writing and rewriting eliciting pleasure both in the producer and in the reader, regardless or even in spite of any new meaning generated through the act of citing.<sup>2</sup> This way of defining the *travail de la citation* appears fitting with the practice of quotation displayed in Graeco-Roman declamations and rhetorical exercises. Authors of the great Hellenic tradition – and Homer came first, as ever, in the line of likely candidates – were revived and cited so as to activate the pleasure of recognition in the listener attending rhetorical performances.<sup>3</sup> Contrast and destabilization, so as to elicit surprise, were common strategies in such intertextual games. Exercises practiced at rhetorical schools would provide an effective training for displaying both verbal prowess and knowledge of the literary tradition. Homer features prominently in progymnasmatic practice.<sup>4</sup> Preparatory exercises could differ greatly in their execution. Some provided the young with the opportunity to rework, as it

<sup>1</sup> Compagnon (1979) 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 15–40.

<sup>3</sup> The knowledge thus mobilized obviously defined – both socially and culturally – the audience and their proficiency.

<sup>4</sup> Criatore (2001) 225–226 and Webb 2010.

were, the Homeric material, by taking alternative points of view, playing with narrative layers and exploiting both the original text and its later reception. At times, though, content and the creation of new (narrative) meanings played only a limited role. In the latter case, the Homeric text was simply distorted or, in the best-case scenario, employed as a useful repertoire of stock characters and narrative situations. However, such well-established practices were not without criticism. Synesius of Cyrene, a Hellenized Christian living in late third-century, early fourth-century CE Cyrenaica, challenges the rhetorical habits of his predecessors and contemporaries,<sup>5</sup> referring explicitly to Homer. The present chapter will deal with his alternative view on rhetorical engagement with Homeric quotations. Moreover, as a contrast to Synesius' stance, this chapter will explore Libanius' rhetorical use of Homer,<sup>6</sup> which epitomizes the pleasure of citation as highlighted by Compagnon. A final section will be devoted to the use of Homer in epistolary communication and more specifically in the letter collections of the two authors under consideration, with a special focus on Libanius.

Synesius was never too reluctant to speak about himself and his literary practice.<sup>7</sup> His letter collection is a very important source for his intellectual biography.<sup>8</sup> Letter 154 in particular, introducing the philosopher and friend Hypatia to two newly penned works, the *Dio* and the *De insomniis*, famously highlights his approach to philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> Homer plays a very important part in it (*Ep.* 154, pp. 271.7–272.3 Garzya):

Τῆτες ἐξήνεγκα δύο βιβλία, τὸ μὲν ὑπὸ θεοῦ κινηθεῖς, τὸ δὲ ὑπὸ λοιδορίας ἀνθρώπων. Καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἐν λευκοῖς ἔνιοι τρίβωσι καὶ τῶν ἐν φαιοῖς ἔφασάν με παρανομεῖν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν, ἐπαῖοντα κάλλους ἐν λέξεσι καὶ ῥυθμοῦ, καὶ περὶ Ὀμήρου τι λέγειν ἀξιούντα καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ῥητορείαις σχημάτων, ὥς δὴ τὸν φιλόσοφον μισολόγον εἶναι προσήκον καὶ μόνα περιεργάζεσθαι τὰ δαιμόνια πράγματα.

5 For a general criticism of the most widespread rhetorical habits, see *Dio* 12 p. 265.17 ff.

6 The two authors are compared and contrasted, though more from an ideological point of view, also in Goldhill (2006).

7 Synesius offers an autobiographical sketch in chapter 18 of his *On providence* (pp. 105.10–106.9 Terzaghi), where he also speaks about his activity as a hymnographer. On the literary background of the passage see Cameron and Long (1993) 374. See also *Ep.* 113, in fine and *Ep.* 41. p. 63.16 ff. Garzya for Synesius' Doric ancestry. As to the "manly" character of his production, see *Eulogy of baldness* 4 p. 197.8 ff. Terzaghi. On Synesius' self-presentation in his later years as a bishop, see Piepenbrink (2012).

8 The letter collection is crucial to trace the social and political life of late-antique Cyrenaica (see Roques 1987). For an attempt of chronology, see Roques (1989).

9 On the political and historical background of this letter, see Pizzone (2012).

I have produced two books this year. The first was inspired to me by God Himself, the second by the slander of men. Indeed, some among both those who wear the white and who wear the dark mantle<sup>10</sup> have maintained that I cheated on philosophy, because I profess beauty in words and rhythm, and I dare to speak about Homer and the figures of the rhetoricians, as if the philosopher should hate literature and occupy himself with divine matters only.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

Homeric poetry and rhetorical practice are significantly associated in this passage, as if they were closely bound to each other. However, in spite of his opponents' allegation, Synesius cannot (nor does he want to) be counted among the professional rhetoricians using Homer as their stock-in-trade. We are not to do here with a purely "rhetorical Homer" fully decontextualized and turned into a repository of useful material and stylistic tricks.

As said above, progymnasmatic practice typically provided multiple occasions for displaying Homeric references (and vice-versa the Homeric poems were massively rhetoricized in exegesis).<sup>11</sup> Homer is a constant presence in the teaching practice of Libanius, one of the most prominent and influential rhetoric-teachers of his time. Such importance is best testified by his collection of preparatory exercises.<sup>12</sup> More in general, poetry was of paramount importance in Libanius' classes.<sup>13</sup> In examining the role played by Homeric themes in Libanius' *progymnasmata* (προγυμνάσματα—preparatory exercises), Ruth Webb has shown that more literary exercises such as *ekphrasis* (ἐκφρασις) and *ethopoieia* (ἠθοποιεῖα) would stimulate the creation of new narratives, wherein the Homeric text is rewritten and even enriched. On the contrary, more "sophistic" exercises, such as confirmation, refutation, *enkomion* (ἐγκώμιον), and *psogos* (ψόγος), "strip out the poetic character of the text" and turn the Homeric material into "grist for the rhetorical mill".<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact, in the *progymnasmata*, Libanius shows how Homer could be basically used to support any argument or point of view. Such flexibility is explicitly theorized in the first section of the "exercise in maxims" where it is argued that the

10 Synesius is alluding here to pagan philosophers and Christian monks. The passage counts among the most discussed in Synesius' work. See Seng (2006) 103 n. 5 for bibliographical references on the letter.

11 See Kim (2010) 117 with further literature.

12 On Libanius' *progymnasmata* in general see Gibson (2008) xx–xxv and (2014). Webb (2010) provides an insightful survey of Homer's presence in Libanius' preparatory exercises.

13 Cribiore (2007) 165.

14 Webb (2010) 148.

richness of the Homeric poems makes them suitable for any subject-matter, even if what really is universal in him are his “maxims” (4.1.1):

Ὁ μὲν πολεμικός Ὅμηρον θαυμάζετω τῶν τακτικῶν, ὁ δ' αὖ τεκτονικός τῶν περὶ τεκτονικῆς ἐμπείρως εἰρημένων. Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ τοὺς ἰατροὺς εἴποι τις ἂν ἀπορεῖν ὅθεν αὐτὸν ἀγασθήσονται. Ἴδοι δ' ἂν καὶ ἡνίοχος καὶ ναυτικός ἀμφοτέρω τὰς ἐαυτῶν τέχνας παρ' αὐτῷ. Μακρὸν δ' ἂν εἴη λέγειν μαντικὴν, χαλκευτικὴν, τοὺς ὑπὲρ δικαιοσύνης, τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θείων λόγους. Ἀλλ' ὁ μοι δοκεῖ κοινῇ πάντας ὠφελεῖν, τοῦτο ἔγωγέ φημι τὰς γνώμας (...).

Let the military man admire Homer for his tactics, and let the carpenter in turn admire him for what he has so expertly said about carpentry. Indeed, one could say that not even doctors lack a reason to admire him. Both the charioteer and the seaman could see their trades illustrated in his works. It would take a long time to discuss prophecy, bronze-working, what he says on righteous living, and what he says on divine matters. But I say that it is his maxims that seem to me to help everyone in common (...).

transl. CRAIG C.A. GIBSON

Interestingly enough, *gnome* (γνώμη), one of the preparatory exercises,<sup>15</sup> is also a term extremely close to the modern word “citation”, which lacks any precise counterpart in the ancient world. Antoine Compagnon posits the *gnome* (γνώμη) at the origin of any practice of quotation, as it connects, thanks to its exemplary character, two texts regardless of the subjects producing or uttering them.<sup>16</sup>

In Libanius' view, not only does Homer have an expertise in all of the arts, what is more he is a champion in common sense. Libanius builds here on Plato's paradoxical praise of Homer, as expressed in the *Ion*, where Socrates ironically extols the poet's versatility (537a–c):<sup>17</sup>

ΣΩ. Οὐ καὶ περὶ τεχνῶν μέντοι λέγει πολλαχοῦ Ὅμηρος καὶ πολλά; Οἶον καὶ περὶ ἡνιοχίας – ἐὰν μνησθῶ τὰ ἔπη, ἐγὼ σοι φράσω.

ΙΩΝ. Ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐρῶ· ἐγὼ γὰρ μέμνημαι.

15 It was the forth according to Ps. Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus, while the first according to Theon: see Gibson (2008) 87.

16 Compagnon (1979) 127–133, with an explicit reference to Homer in Aristotle at p. 128.

17 See Labarbe (1991) 89–101 and Rijksbaron (2007) 193–218 for a commentary on the passage.

ΣΩ. Εἶπε δὴ μοι ἃ λέγει Νέστωρ Ἀντιλόχῳ τῷ υἱεῖ, παραινῶν εὐλαβηθῆναι περὶ τὴν καμπὴν ἐν τῇ ἵπποδρομίᾳ τῇ ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ.

ΙΩΝ. Κλινθῆναι δέ, φησί, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐυξέστω ἐνὶ δίφρῳ

ἥκ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοῖν· ἀτὰρ τὸν δεξιὸν ἵππον

κένσαι ὁμοκλήσας, εἰξαί τέ οἱ ἡνία χερσίν.

Ἐν νύσῃ δέ τοι ἵππος ἀριστερὸς ἐγχριμφθήτω,

ὥς ἂν τοι πλήμνη γε δοάσσεται ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι

κύκλου ποιητοῖο· λίθου δ' ἀλέασθαι ἐπαυρεῖν.

ΣΩ. Ἀρκεῖ. Ταῦτα δὴ, ὦ Ἴων, τὰ ἔπη εἴτε ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μὴ, πότερος ἂν γνοίῃ ἄμεινον, ἱατρὸς ἢ ἡνίοχος;

ΙΩΝ. Ἡνίοχος δῆπου.

**Socrates:** Why, does not Homer speak a good deal about arts, in a good many places? For instance, about chariot-driving: if I can recall the lines, I will quote them to you.

**Ion:** No, I will recite them, for I can remember.

**Socrates:** Tell me then what Nestor says to his son Antilochus, advising him to be careful about the turning-post in the horse-race in honor of Patroclus.

**Ion:** "Bend thyself in the polished car slightly to the left of them; and call to the right-hand horse and goad him on, while your hand slackens his reins. And at the post let your left-hand horse swerve close, so that the nave of the well-wrought wheel may seem to come up to the edge of the stone, which yet avoid to touch [Hom. *Il.* 23.335 ff.]"

**Socrates:** Enough. Now, Ion, will a doctor or a charioteer be the better judge whether Homer speaks correctly or not in these lines?

**Ion:** A charioteer, of course.

Transl. BENJAMIN JOWETT

In Socrates' words the poems lose their poetic specificity and are presented as a sort of collection of practical teachings. Libanius pushes the envelope even further in that Homeric poetry is explicitly presented as a storehouse of adages to be used in the most disparate situations. The original context does not matter anymore, while the text is cut and dissected. The reference can be adapted to any audience. Needless to say, such a dissection implies a profound knowledge of the source material and often requires, as stressed by Webb, that the rhetor goes deep into the text. However, this approach leads equally easily to the eristic distortion of Homer's words, which are used to sustain and reinforce the orator's perspective. Paradoxical encomium, which was one of

the favorites of Second Sophistic authors, provides an obvious case in point.<sup>18</sup> Here the rhetoric flexibility of the poems shows at its best. Webb, pointing to Libanius' strategy in his praise of Thersites, shows how Homer's silences are aptly exploited by the rhetor: what is omitted matters as much as what is said.<sup>19</sup> But even what is said is given an unexpected and biased twist, as Libanius goes as far as to say "it is very worthy to admire this man, who was also found worthy to be remembered by Homer" (8.4.9).<sup>20</sup>

In his work, Synesius points precisely against the risk entailed by the codified – and at times repetitive – practice of late antique rhetorical schools, as exemplarily illustrated by Libanius. Rhetorically trained in Alexandria, Synesius himself came from the same educational system and he surely did not frown upon a polished style and/or the use of poetic quotations. And yet, he is very careful in handling intertextuality. He repeatedly asserts the importance of the original context and contends that poetic texts must not be disfigured into futile stumps, fully detached from their bodies. Quoting is not a goal in itself, according to Synesius, nor does any cut-and-paste work have its own aesthetic value. In the *Eulogy of Baldness*, Synesius speaks out loud against such a perverted practice of quotation (19, p. 223.14–20 Terzaghi):

‘Ομήρου δὲ ἐξαψάμενος, ὥσπερ ἱερᾶς ἀγκύρας, ἔχεται μέχρι τελευτῆς τοῦ βιβλίου· οὕτω δὲ ἀδίκως πᾶν καὶ ῥητορικῶς χρήται τῷ λόγῳ, ὥστε νῦν μὲν ἀπέκοψεν, ὥσπερ νόμου, τοῦ στίχου· ἐτέρωθι δὲ οὐκ ὄντων στίχων, ὡς ὄντων, μέρη μαρτύρεται. “Ἐκτορος γὰρ ἀντικρυς καταψεύδεται, μᾶλλον δ’ Ὀμήρου τὰ περὶ “Ἐκτορος, τάχα δὲ καὶ Ὀμήρου καὶ “Ἐκτορος.

He grabs Homer as if a sacred anchor and holds onto him to the end of his book. And yet he uses his argument quite unjustly and rhetorically, so that he now cut out a bit of the verse as if it were a law, and elsewhere calls up as witnesses parts of verses which do not exist, as if they existed. For he shamelessly alleges falsely against Hector or rather against what Homer says about Hector; therefore, in the end, both against Homer and Hector.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

18 On Thersites in Libanius and his models, see Gibson (2008), 229–237, with a translation of the piece. On Thersites in late-antique performances see also Criboire (2013) 95–96 and Pizzone (2015).

19 Webb (2010) 147–148.

20 See Gibson (2008) 235.



The judiciary vocabulary used here by Synesius reminds one of the passage in *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle explains how the ancient poets, including Homer, can be used as a testimony (1.15.1375b):

Περὶ δὲ μαρτύρων, μάρτυρές εἰσιν διττοί, οἱ μὲν παλαιοὶ οἱ δὲ πρόσφατοι, καὶ τούτων οἱ μὲν μετέχοντες τοῦ κινδύνου οἱ δ' ἐκτός. Λέγω δὲ παλαιούς μὲν τοὺς τε ποιητὰς καὶ ὅσων ἄλλων γνωρίμων εἰσὶν κρίσεις φανεραί, οἷον Ἀθηναῖοι Ὀμήρῳ μάρτυρι ἐχρήσαντο περὶ Σαλαμῖνος, καὶ Τενέδιοι Ἐναγχοῦ Περιάνδρῳ τῷ Κορινθίῳ πρὸς Σιγείεις.

Witnesses are of two kinds, ancient and recent; of the latter some share the risk of the trial, others are outside it. By ancient I mean the poets and men of repute whose judgments are known to all; for instance, the Athenians, in the matter of Salamis, appealed to Homer as a witness, and recently the inhabitants of Tenedos to Periander of Corinth against the Sigeans.

transl. JOHN HENRY FREESE

Compagnon sees in the judiciary context conjured by Aristotle the origin of the rhetorical usage of literary quotations.<sup>21</sup> By evoking the same background, Synesius speaks precisely against such instrumental usage of the ancient authors. Not surprisingly such a statement is to be found in Synesius' most sophistic essay, a humorous response (partly based on autobiographical concerns) to Dio of Prusa's *Eulogy of hair*.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the ironic tone of Synesius' argument, the passage provides us with a glimpse into the compositional practice of imperial rhetors. The lines from the *Eulogy of Baldness* could aptly be read as a comment on the techniques sustaining Libanius' progymnasmatic practice.<sup>23</sup> Synesius reproaches Dio for dismembering Homer, for picking only small "slices" from the abundant banquet served by the poems. The word used is precisely *τεμάχιον*, lit. small slice. *Τεμάχιον* is a term related with the verb *τέμνω*, "cut", and points again to the activity of cutting and pasting a portion of text into a new one. Synesius accuses his long-dead rival Dio of resorting to *τεμάχια* without any regard for the context (18, p. 222.10–17 Terzaghi):

21 Compagnon (1979) 128.

22 See Seng (2012).

23 It is not coincidence that Webb (2010) 146 compares Libanius' progymnasmata with Dio's "Trojan" declamations.

Τί οὖν ὥσπερ ἔρμαίου λαβόμενος ἔχῃ,

ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἔλε Πηλεΐωνα;

“Ὀλως δὲ διὰ τί τεμάχιον ἐκφέρεις, ἀλλὰ μὴ πάντα τὸν στίχον ἔλκεις εἰς μέσον; οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ μὴ σὺ βούλει, τοῦ παρ’ ἡμῶν αὐτὸ γενέσθαι σὺ τὴν ἀνάγκην ἐποίησας.

στῇ δ’ ὀπιθεν, ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἔλε Πηλεΐωνα.

Εὖγε, ὦ Δίῳ, ὥς οὐ παρελκούςας ἀφήρησαι συλλαβάς, ἀλλ’ ἐν αἷς ἅπαν ἐνὶ τούναντίον ᾧ βούλει.

Why then as if you had picked up a windfall, do you seize these words:

She [Athena] seized the son of Peleus by his fair hair [*Il.* 1.197].

And yet, why do you produce just a morsel, instead of bringing forth the whole line? Well then, since you are not willing to do so, you force us to produce it:

She stood behind, and seized the son of Peleus by his fair hair.

Bravo, Dio! For you do not have taken out redundant syllables, but those containing the contrary of what you want to prove.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

Obviously Synesius is ultimately playing the same sophistic game as his target and elsewhere he himself does not refrain from altering the true meaning of the Homeric lines he quotes.<sup>24</sup> However, the passage is enlightening as for the relationship that ideally Synesius wanted to establish with his classical models. In particular, these lines can be better understood if read against the background of Synesius’ dynamic conception of mimesis. The word *τέμαχος* itself is closely related to the ancient practice of imitation, as testified by the famous anecdote whereby Aeschylus contended that all his tragedies were composed out of the *τέμαχη* from Homer’s banquet.<sup>25</sup>

In the final part of the *Dio*, Synesius explains to his son – to whom the work is dedicated – why he did not want to emend his copies of Dio of Prusa’s work.<sup>26</sup> Un-emended books, Synesius argues, stimulate the audience’s intelligence, inducing the reader to become aware of the writer’s technique and intentions so as to be able to integrate the missing parts. Synesius himself is one such reader, up to the point that in public readings he used to supplement the read

24 See *Dio* 15, p. 272.3 Terzaghi with Pizzone (2006) 94–95.

25 Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 8.39.5, 347e.

26 On the *Dio* see Aujoulat (2004) 91–138 (p. 116 on our passage). On the social and cultural background of the work see Garzya (1972). Susanetti (2008) 41–6 rightly connects our passage with the Neoplatonic notion of imagination. On this passage see also Seng (2006) 109–111; Mülke (2008) 31–34, with further bibliography.

work with personal additions. Accordingly, when imitating the ancient models, Synesius never totally disappears behind his model, on the contrary he lets his voice emerge very clearly, even though it does not obliterate that of his predecessors (18, p. 278.12–20 Terzaghi):

Εἴποισ ἂν ἡλικιώτην εἶναι νῦν μὲν Κρατίνου καὶ Κράτητος, νῦν δὲ Διφίλου τε καὶ Φιλήμονος, καὶ οὐδ' ἔστιν ἰδέα φιλομετρίας τινὸς ἢ ποιήσεως, πρὸς ἣντινα οὐ διαίρομαι καὶ ἐπεξάγω τὴν πείραν, καὶ ὅλα συγγράμματα πρὸς ὅλα ποιῶν, καὶ τεμαχίοις παραβαλλόμενος· παντοδαπῶν τε ὄντων τῶν λεκτικῶν χαρακτήρων καὶ πλεῖστον διαφερόντων, ἐν ἐκάστη τῶν μιμήσεων προσηχεῖν ἀνάγκη καὶ τοῦμόν ἴδιον, ὥσπερ ἡ ὑπάτη χορδὴ τὸν ρυθμὸν αὐτῇ μένουσα παραβομβεῖ κινουμένῳ τῷ μέλει.

You would say that at times I am the same age as Cratinus and of Crates and at times as Diphilus and Philemon. There is no form of verse making or poetry in presence of which I am not exalted, none I do not try my hand at, both creating whole works in imitation of whole works, and emulating only small portions. And as many forms of literary style as exist, and however diverse, in every one of my imitations of these my own personal note must resonate. It is thus that the last string, though it remains always the same, re-echoes the melody, in the wake of the played song.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

As it appears from this passage, which significantly closes the *Dio*, Synesius' dynamic mimesis does not apply only to the remake of larger works but also to the imitation or reuse of smaller portions of text. Tellingly, we find again the term *τεμάχιον*, used by Synesius to criticize Dio's citation practice. Earlier in the *Dio*, Synesius compares again, at least implicitly, literary quotations and the chunks of laws brought in as testimony in judiciary speeches. The critique is addressed once more against a certain rhetorical use of the past. Rhetors cannot expect that literary references and quotation do the job for them (16, p. 274.9–16 Terzaghi):

Ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς ῥητορείαις ὁ νόμος τὸ ἀρρητόρευτον· ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἀλόγοις ἡρίθμηται πίστεσιν ὃ τι μὴ παρὰ τὴν πειθῶ τοῦ λέγοντος ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν πολιτείαν ἰσχύει. Καίτοι τινὲς ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἀξιοῦσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ τοιοῦτου ῥήτορες εἶναι, γραμματεῖς ἀτεχνῶς ὄντες. Οἱ δέ, κἂν μάρτυρας ἀναβιβάσωνται, τοῦ πράγματος ἐπὶ τοῦτοις ὄντος, παρ' ἑαυτοὺς οἰήσονται πεπράχθαι τὴν δίκην· οὕτως εἰσι κομποί τε καὶ νεανίαί.

In rhetorical speeches the law is that part which deprived of rhetoric, for it counts among the proofs that are not susceptible of argument, inasmuch as its strength resides, not in the persuasiveness of the speaker, but in the constitution of the state. And yet some of us claim to be orators on such a ground as this, though they are scribes pure and simple. Such men, even if they bring up witnesses in whose testimony the whole case really lies, will believe that the favorable decision had been due to themselves: so vain and childish are they.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

Synesius' reasoning goes as follow: ancient texts must be respected and kept as the "first-hand" (16, p. 274.8–9 Terzaghi) left them.<sup>27</sup> However, plain quotations cannot be taken as a work of rhetoric. On the contrary, precisely the mistakes and gaps present in the original, call for a more active form of mimesis, one that calls for rewriting and reworking.

The final goal of any appreciation of ancient literature is a – respectful – new creation.<sup>28</sup> The one who confines himself to reproducing ancient texts cannot be considered an orator: he is just a copyist, passively reproducing someone else's text. Along the same lines, reading is never a passive exercise, but a constructive and active one. Synesius is quite explicit in this respect and goes as far as to say that for him his "whole handling of books has this one aim in view, namely, the summoning of our forces to activity" (17, p. 275.17–18 Terzaghi). This attitude is fully in tune with the kind of philosophical rhetoric Synesius identifies with.<sup>29</sup> It goes without saying that, within this framework, any literary quotation – but also any act of reading – cannot but be a reworking ending up in the generation of new meanings. However, such new meanings, cannot entirely contrast with or twist the original context of the work to which they belong (18, p. 277.14–16). The voice of the text quoted and reworked must still be heard. The same holds true for the voice of the authors "in between", namely those who built the previous reception of the relevant text. As Synesius says, using a musical metaphor, he is just the last string – granted, with its distinctive character – in a long series of strings composing the melody of literary history.

Synesius does not confine himself to criticizing the most common rhetorical use of Homer. His work provides plenty of examples of meaningful

27 The precept is ascribed to Pythagoras.

28 Libanius' *Declamations* could be seen as new creations of this sort: see Penella (2011).

29 See Brancacci (1985). This idea will enjoy a great popularity in the Byzantine period, especially with Psellos (see Papaioannou 2012).

intertextuality, especially as far as the Homeric poems are concerned. In what follows I will focus in particular on the speech *On Kingship*.

Synesius' *On Kingship* is a peculiar work. Theoretically a *stephanotikos*,<sup>30</sup> it defies the rules of the genre both in tone and length.<sup>31</sup> On a diplomatic mission in Constantinople on behalf of the cities of the Pentapolis, Synesius had to present the young emperor Arcadius with the *aurum coronarium*, or crown gold, and try to get a tax mitigation for his region. In fact, Synesius broadens the scope of his address to the emperor. The speech becomes a pretext to illustrate his own ideas on how to reform the empire, especially as far as the army and the recruitment of barbarian contingents are concerned.<sup>32</sup> Synesius is very aware of the unusual turn of his speech, which grows to be a sort of mirror of princes, and justifies himself as follows (2, p. 7.3–11 Terzaghi):

Οὕτως οὖν ἀνάσχοισθε τοῦ ξένου γένους τῶν λόγων· ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀγροικίας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀλώσονται καὶ κατασιγασθεῖεν, πρὶν καὶ βραχὺ προχωρῆσαι, ὅτι μὴ εἰσὶ θεραπευταὶ πειθοῦς, νέοις ἡδεῖς καὶ συμπαίστορες, ἀλλὰ παιδαγωγοὶ τινες ἀτεχνῶς σωφρονιστὰ καὶ βαρεῖς ἐντυχεῖν. Εἰ δὲ γένοισθε καρτεροὶ συνουσίαν τοιάνδε βαστάσαι, καὶ μὴ παντάπασιν ὑμῖν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπαίνων, οὓς ἀκούειν εἰώθατε, τὰ ὦτα ἐκδεδιγῆται,

ἔνδον μὲν δὴ ὅδ' αὐτὸς ἐγώ.

Try to tolerate, therefore, the peculiarity of my words. Let them not be convicted of rusticity, nor be silenced straight away, for that they are not servants of persuasion, pleasant playmates to the young, but pedagogues of a sort, actually their preceptors and stern to encounter. If you are strong enough to bear with intercourse of this sort, and you are not utterly corrupted by the praises you wish to hear,

**now in truth am I here before you.**

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

The last line encapsulates the work's first intertextual reference. It comes from a pivotal point of Homer's *Odyssey*, namely the passage where Odysseus

30 According to Menander's classification of epideictic speeches. See Long (1996) 97, Aujoulat (2008) 143.

31 See Ando (2000) 180. In fact, the speech sounds at times very aggressive and polemical, perhaps too much to have been actually performed before the emperors. Cameron and Long (1993) 128–129 already expresses doubts on this matter. Equally difficult has been to establish when the speech was composed and, therefore, when exactly Synesius travelled to Constantinople. For an overview, see Aujoulat (2008) 11–48.

32 Aujoulat (2008) 74–81.

eventually reveals his true identity to Philoetius and Eumaeus, who are going to assist him in the final slaughter of the suitors (21.204–11):

Νοστήσαι Ὀδυσῆα πολύφρονα ὄνδε δόμονδε.  
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τῶν γε νόον νημερτέ' ἀνέγνων,  
 ἔξαυτίς σφ' ἐπέεσσιν ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπεν·  
 “ἔνδον μὲν δὴ ὅδ' αὐτὸς ἐγώ, κακὰ πολλὰ μογήσας,  
 ἦλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτει ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν.  
 γινώσκω δ' ὡς σφῶϊν ἐελδομένοισιν ἰκάνω  
 οἴοισι δμῶων· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐ τευ ἄκουσα  
 εὐξαμένου ἐμὲ αὐτίς ὑπότροπον οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι.

And even in like manner did Eumaeus pray to all the gods that wise Odysseus might come back to his own home. But when he knew with certainty the mind of these, he made answer, and spoke to them again, saying: “At home now in truth am I here before you, my very self. After many grievous toils I am come in the twentieth year to my native land. And I know that by you two alone of all my thralls is my coming desired, but of the rest have I heard not one praying that I might come back again to my home.”

transl. AUGUSTUS TABER MURRAY

The reference to this Homeric scene suits particularly well the opening of Synesius' speech, and this for different reasons.

First, the passage belongs to the series of recognition scenes characterizing the final books of the *Odyssey*,<sup>33</sup> in such scenes Odysseus repeatedly asserts his own identity in similar terms first with Telemachus (16.205), then with the faithful servants, as we have seen, and eventually, with Laertes (24.321). Odysseus, though clothed in beggar's rags, reveals himself as the true master of Ithaca, deserving a much more dignified welcome than the one offered by the suitors. Indeed, the theme of good vs. bad hospitality underlies much of the narrative in the last section of the *Odyssey* – as it does in the whole poem.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the narrative context fits perfectly with Synesius' self-portrait in the opening of *On Kingship* as well as with his attempt to create a bond with his listeners, and in particular with the young emperor. Synesius depicts himself as ἐμβριθής and, just like the Cretan Odysseus and his allies, a swineherd and a goatherd,

33 See Wender (1978); Murnaghan (2011).

34 Murnaghan (2011) 77; Saïd (2011) 367–373.

he is ἄγροικος (“rustic, dwelling in the countryside”).<sup>35</sup> He does not care about good looks and flattering words, and yet, in spite of his unrefined and rough appearance, he deserves the best of receptions, since he enters the palace as a representative of philosophy (1, p. 5.12–6.2). Moreover, just as Odysseus’ virility stands out against the suitors’ delicateness and their repeated attempts to win Penelope’s favor, so Synesius’ philosophical roughness provides a stark contrast against the seducing character of sophistic rhetoric, desperately begging for admission into the royal palace, in turn characterized by emasculated luxury.<sup>36</sup>

Second, the reference to the relationship between Odysseus and his servants helps introduce the loyalty theme, which is crucial to the *On Kingship*. One of the major concerns expressed by Synesius in his speech lies in the overwhelming role played by barbarian troops in the Roman army and even in the courtly life of Constantinople.<sup>37</sup> In this respect, again, the Empire is depicted as a perverted household, in which traditional roles are reversed. Barbarians are utterly unreliable and ultimately disloyal, and they consume the resources of the empire just as the suitors ate up Odysseus’ riches. Synesius reinforces this implicit comparison by adding a further reference to the Homeric text, pointing again to the loyal relationship between Odysseus and his servants (19, p. 45.6–14):

Τέτακται γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐν οἴκῳ καὶ πολιτείαις ὁμοίως τὸ μὲν ὑπερασπίζον κατὰ τὸ ἄρρεν, τὸ δὲ εἰς τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἐστραμμένον τῶν εἴσω κατὰ τὸ θῆλυ. Πῶς οὖν ἀνεκτὸν παρ’ ἡμῖν ἀλλότριον εἶναι τὸ ἄρρεν; Πῶς δὲ οὐκ αἰσχίον παραχωρῆσαι τὴν εὐάνδρотаτήν ἀρχὴν ἐτέροις τῆς ἐν πολέμῳ φιλοτιμίας; Ἄλλ’ ἔγωγε, καὶ εἰ νίκας ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν νικῶεν πολλὰς, αἰσχυνοίμην ἂν ὠφελοῦμενος. Ἐκεῖνο μέντοι γινώσκω φρονέω τε.

The same organization holds good for the State as in the family; the male element must defend and the female occupy itself with the care of the household within. How then can we tolerate that the male element should be foreign? Is it not disgraceful that the empire richest in men should yield the crown of glory in war to aliens? For my own part,

35 Synesius’ self-styling is partly modeled after Dio’s *Oration* 1 (Cameron and Long [1993] 374). Significant are also Dio’s 78.37–42 and 32.8–10, where Dio outlines the portrait of an intellectual type shunning the crowd. On Synesius’ “rustic” ideal, which is both existential and stylistic, see also *Eulogy of baldness* 4, p. 197.8 ff. Terzaghi.

36 Aujoulat (2008) 73.

37 See Cameron and Long (1993) and Hagl (1997) on the historical background. See Heather (1988) specifically on Synesius’ anti-Scythian attitude in the *On Kingship*.

however many victories such men might win for us, I should be ashamed of the aid so received. This very thing, 'well I know, and I understand'.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, modified

The formula *γινώσκω φρονέω* can be found three times in the *Odyssey*. All of the three instances belong to dialogues between Odysseus and Eumaeus: at 17.193 and 17.281 Odysseus replies to Eumaeus' instructions, while at 16.136 Eumaeus answers an order coming from Odysseus. The formula stresses the complicity between the two characters and their unity of purpose: both aim at freeing the palace from the plight of the suitors. Similarly, through the Homeric quotation, Synesius seeks Arcadius' complicity, looking for support in his anti-barbarian action. The equivalence between barbarians and suitors is even more explicit in the section of the *On Kingship* devoted to the degeneracy of the imperial pomp. In describing the imperial guard, mainly made of Germans, Synesius uses again a reference to the *Odyssey* (16, pp. 36.15–37.4):

οὐ γὰρ ἦν πω τὸ τῶν δορυφόρων τοιοῦτον, ἀπὸ τῆς στρατιάς στρατιά τις ἔκκρι-  
τος, νέοι πάντες, πάντες εὐμήκεις, τὰς κόμας ξανθοί τε καὶ περιττοί, αἰεὶ δὲ  
λιπαροὶ κεφαλὰς καὶ καλὰ πρόσωπα, χρυσάσπιδες καὶ χρυσεολόγχοι, οἷς, ὅταν  
ποτὲ ὀφθῶσι, τὸν βασιλέα σημαινόμεθα, καθάπερ, οἶμαι, ταῖς προανισχούσαις  
ἀκτίσι τὸν ἥλιον.

Such a thing did not exist at that time as the Guards' regiment, a sort of picked force detached from the army itself, of men all young, tall, fair-haired, and superb, "their heads ever anointed and their faces fair," equipped with golden shields and golden lances. At the sight of these we are made aware beforehand of the king's approach, much as, I imagine, we recognize the sun by the rays that rise above the horizon.

transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD

The line comes from a speech by Eumaeus, where the swineherd (15.332) describes the beauty and refinement of the suitors' attendants, thus advising Odysseus against offering his services to Antinoos and his fellows. The ironic tinge is palpable: Odysseus is much stronger and nobler than the snazzy suitors' servants and the same irony is of course at stake in Synesius' passage.

Finally, in all the passages that we have seen thus far, Synesius speaks in the voice of Odysseus. At first sight this may seem contradictory, since Odysseus is implicitly presented as the embodiment of the ideal ruler.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the intertextual reference to the final books of the *Odyssey* helps establish a connection

38 Montiglio (2011) 95–124.



between the fatherly attitude shown by Synesius toward Arcadius and the father-son relationship between Odysseus and Telemachus. Synesius presents himself as a guide determined to provide viable examples of truly philosophical and truly Roman rule for Arcadius to follow. The goal in both cases is to free the household/empire from any alien presence spoiling it, so as to reestablish the natural order.

Synesius' letter collection further provides an array of examples of meaningful intertextuality. In the letters to Herculianus, with whom Synesius had studied in Alexandria, Homeric references are systematically used to frame and define the relationship with his friend and former fellow.<sup>39</sup> Homeric references play an important role also in Libanius' letters. Admittedly, epistolary communication seems to be particularly suitable for this sort of mimesis, given the letter's personal character. Homeric references are used to sustain and reinforce personal relationships. They may also shape the mode of communication between sender and addressee. The use of Homer in letter writing was a well-established practice in the genre. Interestingly, the anonymous treatise *Περὶ τῶν τεσσάρων μερῶν τοῦ τελείου λόγου*, presumably dating to the middle Byzantine era, recommends precisely to intersperse letters with Homeric quotations: "It is useful to combine prose and poetry, for instance, when one adds a Homeric verse extrapolated from the context or else a smaller part (*τεμάχιον*) of it" (3, p. 573.9–10). We find here again the idea of a fragmented Homeric text reused to embellish epistolary communication. In fact, late antique letter collections show a very sophisticated use of such *τεμάχια*. In this respect Synesius' epistles do not represent an exception in the literary landscape of his time. More often than not, chunks of the Homeric texts help enrich the message conveyed by a given letter, adding to the dialogue between sender and addressee one or more supplementary layers, depending on the text quoted and on its reception history.

As is well known, Libanius' letters offer a most valuable picture of the late antique urban society and of its cultural landscape.<sup>40</sup> Libanius had epistolary exchanges with the major political actors of his time and the collection testifies to his widespread network of pupils, friends, protectors, colleagues. Homer appears very often in the letters. References to the poems may be simply ornamental, as suggested by the treatise *Περὶ τῶν τεσσάρων μερῶν τοῦ τελείου λόγου*, but often they are also structural to the letter, strengthening the missive's message through intertextual memory. A good case in point is represented by Ep. 791, addressed to Maximus of Raphia, archon in Galatia and

39 Pizzone (2006) 23–54. See also now Burzacchini (2016) on the entanglements between everyday life and literary quotations.

40 Norman (1993) 17–28, Cabouret (2000), 9–25, Criboire (2007) 1–6.

dating to 362 CE.<sup>41</sup> Under Julian, Maximus had probably abandoned Christian faith to revert to pagan religion. His situation was somewhat comparable to that of Domitius Modestus, mentioned by Libanius in the letter's opening.<sup>42</sup> Modestus' political situation seemed compromised given some accusations that had reached the emperor's ear. However, Julian, upon closer investigation of the case, had cleared his officer of any unjust allegation. Libanius' letter goes again through these events, comparing Agamemnon's and Julian's behavior (791.3):

Ὁ δὲ Ἀτρεὺς ἐκεῖνος ὁ μέγας, ὁ τῶν ἡμιθέων ἡγούμενος καὶ τῆς Ὀμήρου τυχῶν φωνῆς, ἀσθενέστερα λόγου ποιήσας ἔργα τὸν Παλαμήδην ἀπέκτεινεν. Ἀλλὰ νῦν τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ κράτος καὶ μετὰ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ αὐτὴ βασιλεύει τὰ μὲν λογισμοῖς, τὰ δὲ μαντείαις εὕρισκομένη.

That great son of Atreus, the one who led the demigods and who benefited from Homer's voice, killed Palamedes, thereby committing deeds that diminished his fame. But in the present instance the power of Truth resides with the emperor and Truth herself rules, discovering some things by careful calculation and other things by prophecy.<sup>43</sup>

transl. SCOTT BRADBURY modified

The figure of Palamedes is somewhat conventional in rhetorical exercises and declamations.<sup>44</sup> Here, however, the focus shifts from Palamedes himself to the treatment of Agamemnon's behavior offered by Homer. Libanius seems to imply that not even Homer's art could hide his behavior. The reference to Agamemnon's lack of fairness and the mention of Julian's superiority over the epic hero may here be linked to the recent political – and literary – history of the Empire. In summer 358 CE, some four years before the letter to Maximus was sent, Julian had composed his second and last panegyric of Constantius. The speech bears traces of young Julian's mixed feelings and is famously dotted with Homeric references (more than any other speech by Julian) conveying ambiguous messages.<sup>45</sup> The opening passage, in particular, is based on a not

41 See Bradbury (2004) 147–48 and *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 1, s.v. Maximus 19.

42 Cribiore (2013) 171–172, 177–178 and *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 1, s.v. Modestus 2.

43 Libanius ascribes the gift of divination to Julian (see Bradbury (2004) 147).

44 See for the Byzantine period, Taxidis (2010).

45 Drake (2012) has recently argued that the whole piece is a parody that was actually never performed before Constantius. On the stylistic character of the oration see also Curta (1995).

very flattering comparison/contrast between Constantius and Agamemnon, with an implicit parallel between Achilles and Julian (2.1):

Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονά φησιν ὁ πατὴρ ἐκείνων τῶν λόγων μετρίως καὶ πολιτικῶς προσενεχθῆναι τῷ στρατηγῷ, ἀλλ' ἀπειλῇ τε χρῆσθαι καὶ ἔργοις ὑβρίζειν, τοῦ γέρωσ ἀφαιρούμενον.

Though indeed the author of that tale tells us that Agamemnon also did not behave to his general either temperately or with tact, but first used threats and proceeded to insolent acts, when he robbed Achilles of his prize of valour.

transl. WILMER CAVE WRIGHT

The strategy is clear. Libanius stresses that, in treating his archon fairly and justly, Julian had done better than the Homeric model, better than a half-god and, of course, indirectly better than his predecessor and uncle, Constantius. Furthermore, in praising and celebrating his emperor, Libanius turns out to be superior to Homer himself.

By reading Libanius' letter 990, we learn that the addressee, Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, one of the most powerful men of his time until his *damnatio memoriae* in 392 CE,<sup>46</sup> had composed a Homeric poem, challenging "the words of Homer with Homer's words" (990.2). The poem had apparently had a broad circulation not only in classrooms, but also among wider audiences (990.3). The letter shows to what extent the consumption and the (re-)production of the Homeric text was ingrained in the social and political life of late-antique elite circles. Verse compositions in Homeric style could be used to define the public persona of an influential high-ranking officer. Tatianus, like Synesius, practiced a dynamic mimesis, developing the skills he had likely acquired in classrooms similar to those supervised by Libanius. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Homeric references could be laden with political innuendo, as happens in Libanius' letter to Maximus of Raphia. The note that late-antique intellectuals obtained by plucking the string of the Homeric reference did not obscure the echo of their times: on the contrary, the former was enriched by the latter, as Synesius would put it.

46 See Hendrick (2000), 128–130 and *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* I, s.v. Tatianus 5.

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# Homer in Themistius

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Themistius was a prominent figure in fourth-century Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> He was a senator who held the office of urban prefect in the eastern capital in the 380s. He thought of himself first and foremost as a philosopher, mainly in the camp of Aristotle, and he did some teaching of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> He also was close to emperors from Constantius II through Theodosius I, with a brief eclipse of standing only under Julian. At court he acted as an “imperial propagandist” and “spin doctor.”<sup>3</sup> He has left us a collection of orations, both “public” and “private” – the main subject of my investigation here. The public orations are virtually all imperial panegyrics. The private orations may be described as a mix of autobiography, apologetics, and polemics; cultural programmatics; and philosophical discourses. Before being a philosopher, senator, or imperial panegyrist, Themistius was a consummate Greek *pepaideumenos*. We would expect him, as such, to make use of Homer in the elegantly crafted orations. He does so abundantly. He asks Homer to come to his oration (*Or.* 1.6b, ἡκέτω δ’ ἡμῖν “Ὀμηρος εἰς τὸν λόγον”). He needs Homer’s words (14.180d, τῆς Ὀμήρου ἐδεόμην φωνῆς; cf. 20.236b). The only other Greek classic that matches Homer in his presence in the orations is Plato.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 On Themistius, see especially Stegemann (1934), Dagron (1968), Vanderspoel (1995), and Heather and Moncur (2001). I quote Greek from the standard Teubner edition of Themistius’ orations (Schenkl *et al.* [1965–74]). Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated; those of passages from the private orations usually come from Penella (2000). I dedicate this study to the memory of Brian P. Donaher, co-founder and long-time director of Boston College High School’s Homeric Academy. I am grateful for help from Patrick Lake.
- 2 At *Or.* 2.26d Themistius says that he takes Aristotle as his model of life and of *sophia*. His father Eugenius was also a follower of Aristotle (20.234d–5c). At 23.293d he refers to himself as a teacher of Aristotle’s philosophy (cf. 23.291a), and the person “emulously engaged with Aristotle and [his successor] Theophrastus” at 21.255d is Themistius himself (see Penella [2000] 77 n. 33). Themistius has left us paraphrastic commentaries on some of Aristotle’s works. For his teaching, see 23.288c–96d.
- 3 The terms “imperial propagandist” and “spin doctor” are from Heather and Moncur (2001) xiv 38.
- 4 Which is first and which second is hard to say, and an author’s “presence” is hard to reckon mechanically. See Brons (1948) 141; Colpi (1987) 23, 89. Cf. Kindstrand’s finding ([1973] Vorwort) for his Second Sophistic authors: “[k]ein Dichter oder Autor überhaupt hat annähernd dieselbe Bedeutung wie Homer, Platon vielleicht ausgenommen.” For Themistius’ use of Plato,

In what follows, I first bring together descriptions and evaluations of Homer found in the Themistian orations. I then discuss various uses to which Homer is put in them.<sup>5</sup> I conclude with a few further observations on several other aspects of Homer's presence in Themistius.

## 1 Homer Described and Evaluated

In Themistius' short *Oration* 28, in which Homer is never explicitly named, he is referred to simply as "the poet" who says that men become famous in public assemblies (341d; Hom., *Il.* 9.441).<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere he is collapsed into the generic category "the poets," even when Themistius intends an exclusive reference to him (22.268a and probably 2.36b). So, too, when Themistius ascribes the kingly descriptives *διοτρεφεῖς*, *διογενεῖς*, and *Διὶ μήτιν ἀταλάντους*, frequent in Homer, to the collective "chorus of Calliope" (2.34c–d), he means us to think specifically of Homer; and at 21.250a the first two epithets are indeed explicitly ascribed to him. *Oration* 7.89d contrasts the Old Testament with "Homer and Hesiod and the [other] ἀρχηγέτας" – that is, cultural founders – "of the Greeks."<sup>7</sup> At one point Themistius judges Homer's voice to be greater than that of the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus (15.198c). He prefers Homer's poetry "to anything ever produced at Athens" and says that he "would want to read it at whatever cost" (27.334d).<sup>8</sup> As a philosopher, he gives the poet Homer a special standing when

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see Penella (2014). Not all Homeric material is identified in the standard Teubner edition of Themistius (Schenkl *et al.* [1965–74]). For Homeric references, one should also consult the annotated translations of Themistius, especially Maisano (1995) and Penella (2000).

- 5 I have profited from Kindstrand's discussion (1973) of the categories of use of Homer in the Second Sophistic. I am also aware of the limitations of categorization: not everyone will agree on how to categorize some cases, and some cases will straddle more than one category. Thus, categories should be used *cum grano salis*.
- 6 Does "the poet" mean "the poet *par excellence*" (see Harmon [1923]) or just "the poet whom my audience should be able to identify by my reference to a line of the *Iliad*?" We have a different situation at *Or.* 9.121b–c, where Homer is named and then a few lines later is called "the poet." Here the implication is "the poet just mentioned." It is not clear in which category to put 6.75c, where there is a reference to *Il.* 13.3–9: here Homer is simply "the poet" after sixty-eight lines have passed since he was explicitly named at 73c. How much time needs to pass before an audience will have forgotten an explicit naming of the poet?
- 7 With Maisano (1995) 335, I understand Themistius to include Homer and Hesiod among the *archēgetas*, which requires the addition of "other" in English. Cf. Strabo 1.1.2 [C2], where Homer is called ἀρχηγέτην ... τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας.
- 8 ἐγὼ οὖν τὰ ἐκείνου [i.e., Homer's] ἔπη ... τῶν Ἀθήνησι γενομένων ἀπάντων προτιμῶ. I understand this to mean a preference for "all [other] Athenian writers," not just for all other Athenian poets (*pace* Maisano (1995) 899).



he describes himself as “keeping company with the divine Plato, ... consorting with Aristotle, ... [and] being stubbornly bound to my Homer” (33.366c).

Themistius often thinks of Homer as a war poet and links him in this regard to Herodotus and Thucydides (*Ors.* 15.184b–c, 22.264c–d). Quoting *Iliad* 7.237, he numbers Homer among the poets and historians who celebrate war (16.206c). When invoking the Muses at 19.228b, in an oration devoted to *philanthrōpia*, Themistius asks them to help him sing a song of the emperor Theodosius’ mildness, not an Iliadic song of Achilles’ wrath. In praising Gratian at 13.171b, he wants to highlight how the emperor protects and benefits his subjects rather than to speak of his military skills, as Athena does of those of Achilles at *Odyssey* 22.230. In *Oration* 15, an imperial panegyric, Homer is contrasted to Hesiod, the poet of peaceful activities, which are “more welcome to human beings,” although it is acknowledged that an emperor must be able to operate both in the sphere of war and in that of peace (184c–d, 185a–7b). On the other hand, in *Oration* 30, a short encomium of agriculture, Themistius can let Hesiod trump Homer without qualification by telling the story of how, in a contest of the two, the judges preferred the former to the latter (348b–d).<sup>9</sup> If Homer leans towards war, he nonetheless corrects his own imbalance: Homer, says Themistius, “though more inclined towards Ares, understands, as we do, that an emperor, as emperor, must lay claim more to Themis than to Enyo [goddess of war]” (*Or.* 15.187b). Themistius demonstrates this by quoting *Odyssey* 19.109, 111–14<sup>10</sup> (at *Or.* 15.189a) on the justice of an ideal king in the civilian arena. But Homer also redresses the balance in the *Iliad* itself: Themistius points out that in that war poem Homer speaks differently of the king and of the warrior, not collapsing the former into the latter (*Or.* 15.187c, 188a–b). And in his *Oration* 22 on friendship he remarks that “[Homer, *Il.* 18.107], the poet of strife, prays that strife may perish from among human beings,” and notes that “Homer [in the *Iliad*] ... knew how to depict friendship as well as war” (*Or.* 22.264c–5a, 271a–b).<sup>11</sup> Again, in these passages Themistius is thinking of the *Iliad* redressing its own martial imbalance.

Themistius not surprisingly calls Homer “divinely inspired,” using a word, *thespesios* (*Or.* 15.187b), that his chief philosophical mentor Aristotle had also

9 See Penella (2000) 184. Yet later in the short piece Themistius also brings Homer and Hesiod into harmony, pointing out how both of them support the notion that the weather will be good to just farmers (30.351a–b). Themistius is alluding to two passages (Hom. *Od.* 19.109–14, and Hes. *Op.* 225–37) that had long ago been brought together by Pl., *Resp.* 2.363a–c.

10 On the omission of line 110 here, see Labarbe (1949) 138–141.

11 In *Or.* 22.271a–b Themistius is thinking of the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus and of Diomedes’ respectful forbearance when he is chided by Agamemnon (*Il.* 4.364–418).

used of the poet (*Poet.* 1459a30). Homer is also typically wise – in fact, the “wisest” (*sophōtatos*, *Or.* 6.77d) in his understanding of Zeus. *Sophos* is a word that has a range of connotations. One sense of Homeric *sophia* apparently accepted by Themistius is that Greek philosophy had its roots in him.<sup>12</sup> In his funeral oration for his philosopher father Eugenius, he reports without comment his father’s view that Homer was “the origin and source [προπάτορα καὶ ἀρχέγονον] of Aristotle’s and Plato’s teachings” (*Or.* 20.236b–c). For such a view, Themistius says, his father merits a Homeric compliment; and Themistius quotes *Odyssey* 10.38 to this end (“Heavens, how beloved and honored this man is by everyone!”) A number of assertions in other orations can be construed as supportive of Eugenius’ view: that Plato probably learned from Homer that the man who is just and wise resembles God (15.189a), that Homer said in different words the same thing as the Stoic Zeno about openness to advice (13.172a), and that Socrates praised Homer for his interest in good and evil (34 [v]). Suggestive, too, is the association of Homer with Socrates and Plato at 13.173b.

In *Oration* 6.79c–d Themistius objects, as did Plato (*Resp.* 2.379d–e), to the Homeric belief that Zeus dispenses both blessings and evils; he is criticizing *Iliad* 24.528. He refers to “the philosophical poem” (ἡ φιλοσοφοῦσα ποίησις), the *Odyssey*, for the correct view, that Zeus is “the giver [only] of blessings” (ὁ τῶν ἐάων δοτήρ).<sup>13</sup> *Odyssey* 8.335 actually uses this term of Hermes (δῶτορ ἐάων), but at 8.325 all the gods are called δωτήρες ἐάων. So in *Oration* 6 Themistius appears to restrict “philosophy” to the *Odyssey*. Yet in *Oration* 24.308b–9c he represents both the Nestor of the *Iliad* and the Odysseus of the *Odyssey* favorably, calling the latter “the second [after Nestor] of his two philosophers.” Here Homer’s characters are credited with his own philosophical qualities.<sup>14</sup> *Oration* 24 reflects the tradition that makes both Homeric poems the source of philosophy. Indeed, in discussing the origins of philosophy in Homer, ps.-Plutarch’s *On Homer* 92–151 refers to the *Iliad* more often than to the *Odyssey*. And the Neoplatonists found metaphysical truth in both Homeric poems.<sup>15</sup> In *Oration* 6

12 For this view see Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 4.4, 17.4, 18.1, 34.8, 69.8, 79.2; ps.-Plut. *On Homer* 92–151. The title of a lost work by Porphyry is *On Homer’s Philosophy* (*Suda* Π 2098 Adler), and in his *Homeric Problems* he speaks of Homer “philosophizing” (Schrader [1880] 200). Porphyry’s teacher Longinus wrote a treatise titled *Whether Homer Was a Philosopher* (*Suda* Λ 645).

13 Heather and Moncur (2001) 192 n. 184, incorrectly identify “the philosophical poem” as the *Iliad*. Homer actually does portray Zeus as a dispenser of both good and evil at *Od.* 4.237.

14 Cf. *Or.* 21.264a, “just as Homer’s Achilles sings ... or should I say just as Homer himself does?”

15 Lamberton (1986).

Themistius probably means only that the *Iliad* fails to be “philosophical” in the specific theological issue in question.

Despite Themistius’ respect for Homer and his recognition of the poet’s prestige, he will nonetheless criticize him from time to time. We have just observed, at the beginning of the previous paragraph, his disagreement with Homer about Zeus in *Oration* 6.79c–d; he restates it at 15.194a–b. He also criticizes Homer’s assertion that Apollo and Poseidon built Troy’s walls for wages in service to Laomedon (*Or.* 24.308b; *Hom., Il.* 7.452–3, 21.441–60) and at least interjects an element of doubt – “if we should believe Homer, who cleverly invents things” – about the poet’s story of Zeus, father of Sarpedon, hesitating under the influence of his wife Hera to alter for the better the fate of his son (*Or.* 19.231a; *Hom., Il.* 16.431–61).<sup>16</sup> Homer’s allure “instills absurd opinions about the gods” (*Or.* 26.330b). The poets “do not even exempt the gods themselves from moral weakness” (32.363a).<sup>17</sup> Themistius also faults Homer for describing Agamemnon as both a good king and a brave warrior (*Il.* 3.179) in a passage in which he wants to argue that virtue alone is sufficient for an emperor (*Or.* 13.176c).

### 1.1 *Themistius’ Use of Homer in His Orations*

Themistius often embeds Homeric words or phrases in his own prose, usually without explicitly identifying them as Homeric, where he could have spoken in his own words. Such usages are declaratory or descriptive; since they do not directly aid the argument, we could call them “decorative.”<sup>18</sup> So, for example, in making the point that mind is involved in the making of a state (*Or.* 2.35a), Themistius, adopting a Homeric phrase (*Il.* 22.126, *Od.* 19.163), says that states are not made from oak or rock. In remarking on a philosopher’s lack of sleep (26.312b, πολλὰς νύκτας ἀύπνους ἰαύσας), he is using Homeric words (*Il.* 9.325, πολλὰς μὲν αὐπνους νύκτας ἴαυον). The military spoils of Gratian and Valens are described (13.180a) with the *Iliad*’s word βροτόεντα (“gory”), sleep (21.263c) with the *Odyssey*’s λυσιμελής.<sup>19</sup> Themistius can play off of Homer, too, instead of taking him up straightforwardly: when he says that he is extending his ears, not his

16 In *Or.* 32.363c Themistius calls this story false, although with some redeeming value because it does show a Zeus who was upset and distressed over his son.

17 The immediate example is Hesiod, but Themistius is surely thinking of Homer as well.

18 The term is used by Lamberton (1986) 49, 90, 135, 275, in his discussion of the Neoplatonic use of Homer and by Kindstrand (1973) 36, 64, 91 (“schmückend”), in his study of Homer in the Second Sophistic. I shall return to the term below. Decorative use of the ancient poets by orators is what Quintilian calls *ornamentum eloquentiae* (*Inst.* 1.8.10).

19 For other examples of such embedded Homeric language or phrases in Themistius, see 2.37a, 4.51d, 4.62c, 11.141d, 11.151a–b, 13.167b, 15.193d, 15.206a, 21.245a, 21.247d, 21.263c.

hands, to the emperor (2.26b, ὑπόσχοιμι οὐχὶ τὰς χεῖρας), he is dialoguing with *Iliad* 7.188, ἦ τοι ὑπέσχεθε χεῖρ' (cf., for other examples of this use of Homer, *Ors.* 11.151b, 26.314c). He sometimes embeds a whole line or two of Homer. For example, at 26.316d, in a discussion of innovations in philosophy and just after giving some examples of innovations in other areas, Themistius says "*Thus have we learned of the glorious deeds of our forebears*, who took up philosophy after it had sprung up from obscure and frail seeds planted long ago." The words in italics are *Iliad* 9.524.<sup>20</sup>

It is helpful to distinguish cases in which Themistius speaks in Homer's words – a kind of quotation – from those in which he quotes Homer as a source distinct from himself. *Oration* 15.188c–9a, where Themistius is discussing the ideal ruler, provides an example of each. At 188c, addressing Theodosius, he says "*And you, too [are entrusted with a portion of Zeus' realm], my friend, for I see that you are good and great*, and I shall not fail to say, '*be valiant*.'" The words in italics are *Odyssey* 1.301 and the opening of 1.302. Here Themistius is speaking in his own right, though in Homeric words. As we move forward in the passage, Themistius calls on "the poet [Homer] to teach us how a [ruler] who walks on the earth ... can be thought to have the form" of the divine. "Let us listen to him." He then quotes *Odyssey* 19.109–14 on the godlike ruler. Here Themistius quotes Homer as a source, as an authority, distinct from himself – which is not to say that speaking in his own voice but with Homeric words is not another way of availing himself of the authority of Homer. Homer, like other classical authors, routinely appears in the orations as an authority, although one that is not above criticism (see above). "All that I say I say not on my own authority alone (μόνῳ ἑμαυτῷ); you see that some of what I say is Socratic, some Platonic, some Homeric" (*Or.* 13.173b). Homer can teach by assertion or by providing an apt example, positive or negative. In the imperial panegyrics Homer is repeatedly invoked for what he teaches about kingship (read "emperorship").<sup>21</sup> But he can be an authority for virtually anything;<sup>22</sup> as ps.-Plutarch, *On Homer* 6, wrote, "he was adept at every kind of wisdom and skill and provides the starting points and so to speak the seeds of all kinds of discourse and action" (trans. J.J. Keaney and R. Lamberton).

20 Other examples of the embedding of a line or more: 11.141d, 13.164d, 13.178c, 13.179d, 14.180d, 15.187d, 15.191b, 15.195c, 21.260d, 26.330c, 31.354c.

21 E.g., *Ors.* 1.6b; 5.64b; 11.147d–8a; 15.188d–9a, 191d, 195d.

22 E.g., on theology (*Ors.* 5.69a; 6.73c, 77d, 79c–d; 7.98d; 10.132b), on the Muses (21.255c–d), on Cimmerians (4.55c), on the weather (30.351a–b). Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.8.11–12, noted that the great Latin orators cited the ancient poets because of the authority they imparted (*ad fidem causarum; velut quibusdam testimoniis quae proposuere confirmant*).

Themistius frequently compares the present to the Greek past, and Homeric material is often put to use, in simile or metaphor, for this purpose. So, for example, Themistius finds a parallel for Constantinople's not disturbing the emperor Constantius while he is away from Rome in Thetis' not disturbing Zeus while he was abroad (*Or.* 3.41d; *Hom., Il.* 1.413–27). Valens is compared to Homer's Zeus (8.117a; *Il.* 13.3–5), Gratian to the god of *Iliad* 7.4–6 who gave seamen a fair wind (13.178c), Theodosius to Achilles in the effectiveness of an intervention of his (18.221a; *Il.* 18.215–31). When he thinks of himself as educator of the young Arcadius, Themistius hopes that he may be his Phoenix (16.213a). He compares himself, as a memorializer of deeds, to Homer himself (16.201c, 19.233b). And Homer helps him to speak about unworthy rhetoric and its audience: panegyrics that seek only to give pleasure are decked out with ornaments like those worn by Homer's Hera (18.218d; *Il.* 14.161–221); an indiscriminating audience may be compared to “the kind of shouting barbarian army described by Homer” (26.311c; *Il.* 3.1–5, 4.436–8); and an antidote to theatrical speech makes him think of Homer's moly, which rescued Odysseus from the allures of Circe (26.330b; *Od.* 10.305).<sup>23</sup>

Panegyric not only compares the *laudandus* with figures from the Greek past, it also often insists that the *laudandus* outdoes, or experiences something better (or more noteworthy) than, the earlier figure, thus going beyond the mere comparison of the contemporary with the Homeric noted above.<sup>24</sup> The intention is not to put down the Homeric, but to elevate the contemporary by finding the most prestigious standard for it to outdo. Such trumping usages of Homeric material are common in Themistius' imperial panegyrics. A good contemporary parallel for this practice is Julian's *Oration* 3 [2] Bidez, a panegyric in honor of the emperor Constantius. “In this case,” Julian says, “if one should just remove the names of Homer's heroes and insert and fit in the emperor's name, the *Iliad* will seem to have been composed no more for them than for him” (75a). Julian tells us in the course of his *Oration* 3 [2] how Constantius surpassed one after another of Homer's heroes. According

23 *Or.* 26.330b deserves special comment. There the representatives of a city address philosophy: “Are you suspicious and disapproving of Homer's allure, since it instills absurd opinions about the gods, yet yourself unwilling to provide us with an antidote against the theater or to find us a moly like that which Homer got for Odysseus from Hermes so that he could escape the witchery of Circe?” Here Homer is simultaneously criticized for his misleading allure and appealed to for an example of an antidote against a misleading allure. For further Homeric comparisons in Themistius, see *Ors.* 5.67b, 13.173a, 13.177b, 16.202b, 19.231c, 23.295c, 24.306b, 32.357a.

24 At *Or.* 3.42b–c Themistius begins with a Homeric comparison, but then corrects himself and asserts that Constantius outdoes the Homeric analogue.

to Themistius, *Oration* 4.54a, Constantius will show greater pleasure and gratitude at receiving Themistius' oration than Agamemnon did at receiving a corselet from Cinyras (Hom., *Il.* 11.19–28). Valentinian and Valens work together more effectively than Actor's two sons driving a chariot (6.76b; *Il.* 23.638–42). Valens outdoes Agamemnon in listening to advisers (8.109a; *Il.* 9.108–11), and a river is more cooperative for him than it was for Achilles (10.133b; *Il.* 21.211–382). He outdoes Homeric deities (7.87b) and in the Procopian revolt experienced a far graver danger than did Troy's Thracian allies from Odysseus and Diomedes (7.91b). The young Valentinian, son of Valens, does not have the delicate hands of the adult Ithacan suitors (9.121c; *Od.* 21.151). Gratian is superior to Achilles (13.174a–b). The buildings of Theodosius' Constantinople are more splendid than Menelaus' palace (18.223a). Theodosius rightly does not dispense death and evils, unlike Homer's Zeus (19.228c–d, cf. 19.231a; *Il.* 8.69–72, 19.223–4, 24.527–8); and his transformation of the minds and hearts of those guilty of crimes is more remarkable than Athena's physical transformation of Odysseus for his son (19.231c; *Od.* 16.172–9).<sup>25</sup> He is more kingly than Agamemnon (34 [xxv]). In 31.355b it is the Constantinopolitan senate, not a member of the imperial house, who is flattered: Homer had only nine Muses, but the senators have eighteen – that is, two sets of statues of them, one on each side of the senate house.

Such trumping is not restricted to the imperial house and the senate. Themistius deploys it for himself and his immediate world, too. If Phoenix gave his charge Achilles meat and wine, Themistius does better, offering his own charges the nectar and ambrosia of his teachings instead (9.123c, 16.213b, 18.224d, with *Il.* 9.487–9; cf. *Or.* 13.173a). Themistius is not only comparable to Homer (16.201c, 19.233b), he also outdoes him: he says (15.185a) self-defensively that he could speak words more peaceful than Homer's (and more regal than Hesiod's). And the assertion (*Or.* 4.54a) that Constantius will show greater pleasure and gratitude at receiving a Themistian oration than Agamemnon did at receiving a corselet from Cinyras is doubtless meant to hint that the Themistian offering outdoes the corselet as much as that Constantius' response is more pronounced than Agamemnon's. In his funeral oration for his father Eugenius, he pictures the old man tending to his vineyard and compares him to Odysseus' father Laertes in the vineyard. Laertes, though, as Odysseus

25 Further Themistian examples of Homeric trumping by, or involving, emperors may be found in *Ors.* 3.42b, 6.75c, 7.86a, 7.96d, 8.111–12a, 8.116a–c (Valens trumps Menestheus, and the Iberian prince Bacurius (Heather and Matthews (1991) 31, n. 56) or the Armenian king Papa [Maisano (1995) 396 n. 47] trumps Agamemnon), 10.132a, 10.133d, 11.152b, 14.181c, 16.202c, 16.208c, 16.210c.

noted, was unkempt, whereas Eugenius was not – but Themistius immediately explains that he is referring to the condition of his father's soul, not of his body. Nor would a comparison of Eugenius' words to the beautiful fruit of Alcinous' garden have done justice to those words, whose aim was higher than the pleasure of the garden (*Or.* 20.237a–d; Hom., *Od.* 7.112–32, 24.220–50). To cope philosophically with his father's death Themistius will need, not just eyes as steady as Odysseus' while he was concealing the pity he felt for his wife in *Odyssey* 19.209–12, but an even greater endurance, since he will never be reunited with his father on earth again (20.234a). In *Oration* 4.50a he imagines himself having to have undertaken a much more challenging journey than Odysseus did when leaving Calypso's isle if he had decided to leave Constantinople to join Constantius in Rome. Themistius does not doubt his mother as Telemachus had doubted Penelope (21.244a; *Od.* 1.213–16). He measures the effort of philosophy against the Homeric world: its pursuit requires more participants than were needed in the Homeric hunt for the Calydonian boar; yet those who find philosophical truth will not fight over it, as did those who slaughtered that animal (21.255a; *Il.* 9.529–49).<sup>26</sup> The ten-year siege of Troy serves to designate an excessive length of time; an ideal house is one better than that of Menelaus (23.289a, 24.306b).

Sometimes one finds Homeric allusions or quotations in Themistius that at first sight appear to be merely decorative; but if the Homeric context is recognized, they are seen to contain an implicit comparison or an implication that Themistius' contemporary trumps a Homeric character. When Themistius in his imperial panegyrics wants to refer to an emperor's oversight of the army and his many other responsibilities, he sometimes does so in Homer's words (*Il.* 2.25, 62) rather than in his own: ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλεν (1.6d, 2.34c, 8.102a, 11.141d). In Homer, these words are applied to Agamemnon. So Themistius was prompting a listener or reader who recognized the Homeric context to compare the subject of the panegyric with kingly Agamemnon. In *Oration* 5.70d, where he wants to associate Jovian with Constantine, Themistius says of the former "just so [i.e., like Constantine's] were [Jovian's] feet, just so his hands and the glances of his eyes," using a quotation from *Od.* 4.149–50 in which Telemachus is being compared to his father, hence inviting his audience to compare the pair Jovian/Constantine to the pair Telemachus/Odysseus. Speaking of Valens' troubles in 7.86b, Themistius says that anyone else, "even someone who, to quote Homer, is longsuffering (ταλασίφρονα)," would not have persisted; Homer regularly applies the epithet to Odysseus, so Themistius is

26 At 29.344a philosophy is ironically said to outdo the cleverness of Odysseus' grandfather Autolycus.

implicitly saying that Valens trumps Odysseus. When the ageing Themistius says in 18.223c that “along with my active soul, my body, too, springs up and raises itself, and my old age is scraped off (τὸ γήρας συναποξύεται),” he is alluding to a Homeric line spoken by Phoenix (*Il.* 9.446, γήρας ἀποξύσας) and reminding us that he likes to compare himself to him (see above).<sup>27</sup> One last example will suffice here: the angry teacher shaking his aegis at 21.261c will suggest a comparison to the angry Iliadic Zeus (*Il.* 4.167, 15.229–30).<sup>28</sup>

So some uses of Homer that at first appear to be “merely” decorative are more than decorative. But in fact there are no “merely” decorative uses of Homer. If they do not help the argument, they still have other than decorative purposes. On occasion they can create an appropriately epic feeling, for example, when decorative Iliadic usages appear in a military context.<sup>29</sup> But even when decorative uses of Homer, along with such uses of other canonical texts, serve no other intratextual purpose, they, along with any other kinds of use of all canonical texts, always serve two transtextual purposes: they contribute to the grounding of imperial Greek identity in the classical past, and they advertise the author’s membership in the elite corps of *pepaideumenoi*.<sup>30</sup> However intimate Themistius’ knowledge of the text of Homer actually was, he gives the impression that he knows it inside out, that he can come up with an appropriate quotation or allusion for any context. Although he rarely does it, he can create miniature centos by combining two Homeric half or full lines from different passages.<sup>31</sup> At *Or.* 33.365c he supplements Homer, *Od.* 4.93, with two and

27 The words from *Il.* 9.446 are also echoed in *Or.* 13.167b, but are there applied to the renovation of cities.

28 Further examples of implied comparison or trumping: 8.117a (Valens compared to the sun; see e.g. *Il.* 3.277); 9.121b (in not being fed animal fat and marrow and not being frightened at the crest of a helmet, the young Valentinian outdoes Astyanax, *Il.* 6.470, 22.501); 9.121c (the young Valentinian compared to Pandarus, *Il.* 4.123); 11.143a (the description of the ideal ruler as Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος, an epithet of Odysseus in the *Iliad*, suggests a comparison of Valens to Odysseus); 13.166c (Themistius’ desire to praise the “head and eyes” of the ideal ruler suggests comparison to Agamemnon [at *Il.* 2.478], whose eyes and head are like Zeus’); 13.173a (Gratian never has a black heart, μέλαινα φρήν, and therefore trumps Agamemnon, *Il.* 1.103); 26.312b (is the philosopher who “spent many sleepless nights” (*Il.* 9.325) being hyperbolically compared to Achilles?).

29 E.g. *Or.* 2.37a, 5.66c, 9.121b, 16.210d. Typically, three of these passages, although they involve military confrontation, are quick to stress the theme of peace and reconciliation.

30 Note Kim (2010) 216, “the mere invocation of the poet’s [i.e., Homer’s] name (not to mention the quotation of his verses) ... could be seen as an attempt to inscribe oneself within the Greek literary and cultural tradition.” Quintilian regards the display of *eruditio* as one reason for orators’ quotations of the ancient poets (*Inst.* 1.8.11).

31 At *Or.* 26.330c he makes a line by combining half of *Il.* 21.311 and half of 16.363. At 21.260d he makes a two-line quotation by combining *Od.* 9.109 with *Il.* 6.48.



one-half hexametrical feet of his own making. At 18.225b, lauding Theodosius and his son Arcadius, Themistius “corrects” his version of Homer, *Iliad* 6.479, πατρός δ’ ὃ γε πολλὸν ἀρείων (πατρός γ’ ὅδε πολλὸν ἀμείνων according to West) with his own πατρός δ’ εἰς ἴχνια βαῖνοι, calling his version more moderate and stronger (μετριοτέρα καὶ δυνατωτέρα); he does not wish to diminish Theodosius by hoping that his son will be better. In quoting or alluding to Homer without explicitly saying so or in requiring the audience to recognize the context of an Homeric quotation or allusion to appreciate fully his own use of it, Themistius challenges the *pepaideumenoi* who are listening or reading to make full use of the *paideia* they share with him.

### 1.2 *Homer Allegorized*

Themistius’ use of Homer is overwhelmingly literal. Nonetheless, he occasionally understands Homer allegorically. There is nothing remarkable about this cohabitation of the two approaches.<sup>32</sup>

In *Oration* 22.279b–d, on friendship, Themistius remarks on the “face of villainy wearing a mask of kindness.” This is what the Homeric Scylla represents. Themistius imagines a Scylla whose upper body is that of a young woman, but whose lower body consists of “frightening and awful dogs.” What Homer means is that Odysseus, knowing her whole body – that is, that her awful side wore a mask of female beauty – was not deceived by the upper body. “If a person does not think that this is what Homer says but sees only the apparent sense of the story (τὸ φαινόμενον τοῦ μύθου), then it seems to me that, upon beholding Scylla, he sees the human female but will be unable to see the dogs.” The oration concludes with an allegorical tale about Heracles, narrated at some length.

In *Oration* 32.357a there is a hint that the herb Helen got from the Egyptian Polydamna (Hom., *Od.* 4.220) could be understood allegorically. There is also a brief hint of an allegorical interpretation of a scene in the *Odyssey* in the Homeric ending of *Oration* 24 (see below): we are invited to understand the word “strength” in the Nausicaa scene at *Odyssey* 6.130, “he proceeded like a mountain-bred lion trusting in his strength (ἀλκί),” as “reason” (24.309c). Allegorical interpretation in the Homeric ending of *Oration* 27 (see below) is more elaborate: there it is explained that the plant Hermes gave to Odysseus when he went to Circe, the moly, was nothing other than virtue.<sup>33</sup>

32 Cf. Lamberton (1986) 109–110, 115; Richardson (1975) 71–74; Richardson (1993) 46–47.

33 Cf. Buffière (1956) 150, 292, 512.

### 1.3 *Beginning and Ending with Homer*

Homeric material of all kinds is found scattered unevenly<sup>34</sup> throughout Themistius' orations. I want to note here, though, how frequently something Homeric appears in the openings or closings of the orations. (I define "opening" and "closing" here, somewhat arbitrarily, as the first or last thirty Teubner lines of an oration.) In twenty-nine orations that merit consideration here,<sup>35</sup> Homeric material of some sort appears in the opening of twelve and in the closing of eleven.<sup>36</sup> The only classical author who enjoys this level of presence in the openings and closings of the orations (more often in the closings) is Plato.

In three orations Homeric material significantly thickens in one opening and in all three closings and extends beyond the thirty-line limit I set in the previous paragraph. *Oration* 24 ends with a Homeric lecture (308b–9c). Themistius is speaking to the Nicomedians on philosophy, rhetoric, and true learning.<sup>37</sup> True learning, he says at 308b, is a bulwark, "the only wall that truly is the work of Apollo," and thereat begins the Homeric lecture. First, we should not believe Homer when he tells us that Apollo (and Poseidon) built the Trojan wall, a mere physical wall. On the other hand, we can accept Homer's depiction of Nestor, a man of wisdom rather than of physical strength. We should also attend to Homer's Achilles as a negative example: he was lacking in good judgment. And, like Nestor, Homer's Odysseus is also worthy of our admiration, a man of good judgment, virtue, and reason. This discussion quotes *Odyssey* 6.130 and alludes to numerous other Homeric passages.

*Oration* 27 ends with a sustained Homeric discussion (340a–1a). Having commented on our need for the heavenly plant of virtue, Themistius says that this is what "Homer, or rather Hermes," gave to Odysseus when he went to free his companions from Circe. One does not have to travel far to get this plant;<sup>38</sup> it is available wherever one is. Themistius shows how Homer proves this. He also explains that, when Homer calls the plant given to Odysseus dark of root but having a milky flower, he means that acquiring virtue is a hard process, but

34 There is an unusual thickening of Homeric material in *Or.* 13.171b–3b.

35 *Or.* 12 is to be excluded; it is a ps.-Themistian Latin text. *Ors.* 17, 25, 28, and 30 should be excluded because they are too short.

36 I exclude from consideration the extant endings of *Ors.* 21, 23, and 33; the first may break off before reaching its original ending (Penella [2000] 14), the second and third certainly do so.

37 On the oration, see Vanderspoel (1995) 43–48; Penella (2000) 22–24.

38 Just as – so the oration argues – one does not have to go to Athens for a good rhetorical education.

its acquisition is sweet. Hesiod, he argues, supports Homer here by confirming that rest follows hard work.

Finally, in *Oration* 15,<sup>39</sup> addressed to the emperor Theodosius, Homeric material significantly thickens both in the opening and in the closing. From the opening of 15 at section 184b to section 189a Homer is important to the main argument. Themistius' central point here is that emperors must be able to perform well both in war and in peace, and the orators who celebrate them must be able to speak of both arenas of activity; but the essence of kingship is to be found in the arena of peace, in activities that demand the upholding of justice, and it is in the upholding of justice that the king resembles the divine. Homer is initially brought in, with Thucydides, as a quintessential narrator of war, in contrast to Hesiod. But Homer, we are told, also knew that, to the true king, justice is more important than war. Homer differentiates the regal from the martial art. Themistius demonstrates this with reference to a number of Homeric passages. The opening culminates with a quotation of *Odyssey* 19.109, 111–14, lines that describe the just king and his thriving subjects. Despite this elevation of the activities of peace, *Oration* 15 ends with an expectation that a Gothic war is at hand. The ending consists of five consecutive quotations from Homer, which announce this war and urge victory.

#### 1.4 *Themistius' Paraphrases*

We have paraphrastic commentaries by Themistius on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, *On the Heavens*, *Metaphysics* XII, *Physics*, and *On the Soul*.<sup>40</sup> These are utilitarian lower-level instructional works. They did not demand the frequent display of the Greek classics that the high register of formal oratory did. Nonetheless, Homer does appear in them, although not with the frequency with which he appears in the orations.

The well-known Homeric epics are a source of examples in the paraphrases. In *In Arist. Ph.* pp. 100–1 Schenkl, Themistius is discussing hyperbolic thinking, “actual things ... not true in the same way as thoughts”: “I *think* of you as much larger than a mountain ... And *are* you, then, to quote Homer, ‘equal to the peak of a mountain’” (trans. R. Todd)? He is referring here to Homer, *Odyssey* 10.113, where a woman is described as being as large as the peak of a mountain. Elsewhere in his paraphrase of Aristotle's *Physics* he resorts to Homer for one example of the many ways in which we use the phrase “x is in y” and for examples of something that is both continuous and counted (namely, a spear eleven cubits long at Hom., *Il.* 6.319), of the use of the word “now” (at *Il.* 8.186), and

39 On this oration, see Vandespoel (1995) 199–204 and Heather and Moncur (2001) 230–235.

40 See Vandespoel (1995) 225–228; Todd (1996) 2–4.

of contact without fusion (at *Il.* 23.666, where Epeius lays hold of a mule).<sup>41</sup> In his discussion of definition in *In Arist. An. post.* pp. 48–9 Wallies, he uses some phrases from Homer as examples of his point. The uses of Homer I have so far considered were added to the paraphrases by Themistius himself and do not appear in the original Aristotelian texts he is commenting on.

But in the paraphrase of *On the Soul* two Homeric references were already present in the paraphrased Aristotelian texts. In these two passages Themistius views Homer as an *Urphilosoph*, as someone who has philosophical views that should be referenced – not at all surprising given both the view that philosophy had its roots in Homer and the influence of Homer on philosophy, which would have its most substantial monument in Neoplatonism. Here is Themistius in *In Arist. De anima* pp. 9–10 Heinze:

Similarly, Anaxagoras too says that the principle that causes movement is the soul, as does anyone else who has claimed that intellect causes the universe to move. Yet he differs from Democritus. He [Democritus] thinks that there is no distinction between intellect and soul..., and he believes that thinking (*phronein*) is identical with perceiving, and brings in Homer as a witness for correctly depicting Hector<sup>42</sup> when prostrate without sense-perception as prostrate ‘without thought’ (*allo-phroneôn*). Now [Homer] does not use ‘intellect’ in distinction from ‘sense-perception’, and as a capacity directed to the truth, but he does identify intellect and sense-perception, i.e., soul and intellect. On this [relationship] Anaxagoras is the more obscure ...

trans. R. TODD

Here Themistius does not merely cite a passage in Homer (in connection with the philosophers Anaxagoras and Democritus) to illustrate a psychological view; he also assumes that Homer himself holds that view. In this, he goes further than Aristotle, who, in the text Themistius is explicating, is only interested in Democritus’ appeal to Homer and does not elaborate on Homer’s own view. Again at *In Arist. De anima* p. 87 Themistius brings Homer in (in company with Empedocles), asserting that the epic poet “believes that the intellect is transformed and altered along with the surrounding world [and] ... that reason has a corporeal nature, and he in effect makes the intellect into sense-perception.” In this case, the Aristotelian passage being explicated, also linking Homer to Empedocles, does explicitly affirm that the two authors “hold that thinking,

<sup>41</sup> *In Arist. Ph.* pp. 108, 149, 150, 174.

<sup>42</sup> Actually Euryalus (*Hom., Il.* 23.698). The same confusion in *Arist., Metaph.* 1009b30.

like perceiving, is a bodily function" (*De an.* 3.427a27). At *In Arist. Cael.* p. 90 Landauer, Themistius repeats Aristotle's rejection of a cosmological view found in ancient mythology (*Cael.* 284a19), this time explicitly mentioning Homer, as Aristotle does not.<sup>43</sup> Finally, there are some cases in the paraphrases in which it is not entirely clear whether Themistius is merely drawing on Homer to illustrate a philosophical view or actually believes that Homer himself held that view. In his paraphrase of *On the Soul* p. 7, 43 Heinze, Themistius is discussing somatic manifestations of emotion. He gives some examples from Homer, commenting that the phenomenon was not unknown (οὐδὲ ... ἄδηλα) to the poets; this does not necessarily mean that he believes that they thought about it theoretically. Again, in the same work (p. 57) Themistius quotes Homer to illustrate that movement is perceived by all the senses. Finally, again in the paraphrase of *On the Soul* p. 120, he quotes the Homeric phrase ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω (e.g., *Il.* 3.109–10) to illustrate that human beings perceive time. None of these Homeric references appear in the Aristotelian passages being paraphrased.

### 1.5 *Homer and Plato*

I have already alluded to the unmatched prominence of both Homer and Plato in Themistius' orations. They stand apart there from other classics, forming something of a pair. As Themistius' Italian translator Riccardo Maisano has noted, "[i]l patrimonio [letterario] tradizionale è rappresentato [in Temistio] principalmente dai due grossi nuclei costitutivi più importanti, quello platonico e quello omerico."<sup>44</sup> For the whole imperial Greek world Homer quite simply "is first and middle and last and gives of himself to every boy, adult, and old man just as much as each of them can take from him" (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 18.8); "the only end of Homer for human beings is the end of life" (Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 1.1, trans. D.A. Russell and D. Konstan). As for Plato, he had a special appeal to Themistius because, like the great Plato, Themistius too was a philosopher. Plato was also the teacher of Themistius' chief philosophical master Aristotle and, at the same time, a literary classic like Homer.

I conclude with another comment by Maisano on these two authorities in Themistius:<sup>45</sup> These references [to Plato], along with the frequent Homeric

43 I rely on Landauer's Latin translation (1902) of the Hebrew text.

44 Maisano (1994) 429. Cf. Kindstrand (1973), writing of the Second Sophistic, in his unpaginated "Vorwort": "Kein Dichter oder Autor überhaupt hat annähernd dieselbe Bedeutung wie Homer, Platon vielleicht ausgenommen ...".

45 Maisano (1994) 428–429:

"Questi richiami, insieme ai frequenti riecheggiamenti omerici, hanno per Temistio un valore che potremmo definire liturgico. Egli cita i suoi *auctores* come a celebrare un culto. È evidente che la venerazione dei pagani tardoantichi per Omero e Platone

echoes, have for Themistius what we could call a liturgical value. He cites his *auctores* as if to celebrate a cult. It is clear that the late ancient pagan veneration of Homer and Plato in the East and of Virgil and Cicero in the West is due to the persistent desire of every human intellect for a book “in which everything may be found.” Christians of the time obviously satisfied this desire with the Bible. The cultivated Greek-speaking pagan’s response was Homer and Plato. As tolerant and reconciling as he was, he intended to show that his *auctores*, too, had a response to every problem and a repertoire of hidden meanings....

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in Oriente e per Virgilio e Cicerone in Occidente è dovuta alla persistente aspirazione di ogni intelletto umano verso il libro ‘in cui ci sia tutto’. A questa aspirazione i cristiani del tempo soddisfacevano ovviamente con la Bibbia: Omero e Platone erano la risposta del pagano cólto di lingua greca che, per quanto tollerante e conciliante, intendeva dimostrare che i suoi *auctores* avevano anch'essi una risposta ad ogni problema e un repertorio di significati riposti ...”.

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**PART 3**

*Philosophy – Theology*





## Stoic Homeric Allegoresis

*Ilaria L.E. Ramelli*

Allegoresis, or allegorical exegesis, was especially applied in antiquity to culturally and religiously authoritative texts, such as the Homeric poems.<sup>1</sup> Allegoresis is a modality of interpretation of a text, as opposed to allegory, a modality of composition of a text. There were different kinds of allegoresis, especially when applied to Homeric texts, as we shall see: physical and ethical allegoresis mainly identified the divinities and their attributes with physical elements or phenomena (such as aether, air, water or the *pneuma* extending in each of them) or ethical concepts (wisdom, courage, love and so forth). Later we also find spiritual and mystagogical allegoresis, especially in Platonic exegesis: it identified elements in the text with spiritual, noetic realities and operated an elevation of the reader's mind.

Allegoresis was practiced chiefly by “pagan” philosophers such as Stoics and Middle- and Neoplatonists, who allegorised myths concerning divinities, rituals, cultic epithets of deities, and the like, and by philosophically minded Hellenistic Jewish and Christian exegetes, who read Scripture allegorically – but some of them, such as Origen, seem to have applied allegoresis to Homer and Plato as well. All these allegorisers aimed at finding deeper meanings and philosophical truths in traditional accounts, thereby rescuing them from accusations of superficiality or impiety. The goal was to find in Homer and other ancient poets, as well as in Scripture, meanings “worthy of the divine.”

Long before Stoicism, in the sixth century BCE, Theagenes of Rhegium “first” allegorised and defended Homer (ἀπολογία), according to a note by Porphyry on *Iliad* 20.67,<sup>2</sup> and practiced Homeric philology. Apparently out of the desire to avoid the difficulty raised by myths such as the theomachy, he identified Homeric deities with physical qualities, such as hot and cold, dry and moist, and ethical notions, such as wisdom, desire, and reason. Pherecydes also allegorised Homer about deities according to Celsus *ap.* Origen, *Cels.* 6.42. Physical and ethical allegoresis will appear again in Stoicism. The defence of Homer

<sup>1</sup> See Ramelli (2004; 2009b; 2011a).

<sup>2</sup> Porphyry *Quaest. Hom.* 1.240.14 Schrader (1880) = *Schol. B in Il.* 20.67; Domaradzki (2011; 2017).

from charges of impiety by allegorising his myths was a strategy still adopted in the 1st–2nd century CE by Heraclitus the Grammarian, as we shall see.

# 1 Stoic Homeric Allegoresis as Philosophy: Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus

Stoic allegoresis of Homer was dictated by the above-mentioned purpose of finding worthy meanings in Homer's myths and may have been prompted by Plato's ban on Homer (overcome only by later Platonists). The philosopher Heraclitus had also attacked Homer and wanted him banned from poetic contests.<sup>3</sup> He called Homer ironically "the wisest of the Greeks,"<sup>4</sup> because Homer was already considered the fount of all knowledge – this claim, as we shall see, will inform the Homeric allegoresis of Crates, Heraclitus the Grammarian, and Ps.-Plutarch.

For the Stoics, allegory was part and parcel of philosophy, not just a rhetorical device or an etymologizing exercise, although etymologies were often used by them. An important foundation of Stoic allegoresis of poetry, and primarily Homeric poetry, was their definition of poetry as "poetic/creative form endowed with meaning [σημαντικὸν ποίημα], which comprises a representation/imitation [μίμησις] of human and divine things."<sup>5</sup> Poetry is not merely ornamental or recreative; it has a meaning which concerns philosophy, particularly theology/physics and ethics. This is also the background against which to read the Stoic paradox that only a sage could be a poet.<sup>6</sup>

Zeno valued Homer by allegorizing his poems and thereby revealing in them hidden philosophical truths.<sup>7</sup> With this intention he composed a commentary on both Homeric poems: *Homeric Questions*, in five books. According to Dio Chrysostom, Zeno "wrote about the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Margites*: it seems that this poem, too, was composed by Homer, but when he was younger."<sup>8</sup> Zeno also established the principle, anticipated by his inspirer Antisthenes and followed by his disciple Perseus, that in Homer some things are written "according to opinion" and others "according to truth,"<sup>9</sup> as attested by Dio Chrysostom: "Zeno blames nothing among Homer's works, explaining and

3 Fr. 42DK, LM D21, D82, D83, R13a.

4 Fr. 56DK = D22 LM = 21 Marcovich, 22 Kahn.

5 Diog. Laert. 7.60.

6 SVF 3.654 = Stobaeus 2.61.13 W.; cf. Strabo 1.2.3.

7 See Ramelli (2004) ch. 2.1–2; (2007) ch. 1.2 with the relevant texts and commentaries.

8 Or. 53.4 (SVF 1.274).

9 The same distinction appears in a scholion to Homer, *Sch. ABT in Il.* 8.428.

teaching that he wrote some things according to opinion [*κατὰ δόξαν*], and others according to truth [*κατὰ ἀλήθειαν*], that he might not give the impression of contradicting himself, in some cases in which he would appear to have stated opposite things. This theory had been already supported by Antisthenes ... but he did not elaborate on it, while Zeno argued for it in detail, point by point.”<sup>10</sup> Although the fragment does not give any specific example of what is “according to opinion” and “according to truth” in Homer in Zeno’s opinion, the philosopher’s task is to distinguish the passages according to truth from those according to opinion, and interpret them allegorically, so as to find out the truth hiding there. In this way, Zeno could defend Homer by interpreting him allegorically in philosophical terms, at the same time enhancing the value of his own philosophy by showing that it was already encrypted in Homer.

According to Cicero,<sup>11</sup> the kind of allegoresis applied by Zeno to Homer was physical: deities – in accord with Stoic immanentism – were identified with elements. For example, Hera symbolised air, Zeus the sky or aether, Poseidon the sea, Hephaestus fire, etc.<sup>12</sup> Physical allegoresis remained predominant in Stoic exegesis. The identification of the supreme divinity with aether, the purest element,<sup>13</sup> continued throughout antiquity to the Middle Ages, as exemplified by the commentaries on Martianus Capella.<sup>14</sup> Zeno also initiated Stoic ethical allegoresis. For instance, he interpreted the Dioscuri as representing right arguments (*ὀρθοὶ λόγοι*) and morally good dispositions (*σπουδαῖαι διαθέσεις*).<sup>15</sup>

In his interpretation of Homer and other ancient poets, Zeno sometimes employed etymology, a method of which Stoic allegorists would avail themselves a great deal – Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Antipater, Diogenes of Babylon, Apollodorus of Athens, Crates of Mallus, the allegorical treatise used by Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2, Cornutus – who employed the key terms *ἐτυμολογία*, *ἐτυμολογέω*, *ἔτυμον*<sup>16</sup> – Heraclitus the Grammarian, and the author of the *Life and Poetry of Homer* (on whom see below). For example, in his exegesis of the beginning of Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Zeno had the name Chaos derive from *χέομαι*, “I am poured, I flow.”<sup>17</sup> This etymology will be found again in Cornutus and other allegorical sources. The Titans represent natural elements, for instance Krios

10 *Or.* 53.4 (*SVF* 1.274). Antisthenes is the Cynic philosopher, who exerted a remarkable influence on Zeno.

11 *De natura deorum* 2.63 (*SVF* 1.166); 1.36 (*SVF* 1.167).

12 *SVF* 1.169.

13 *SVF* 1.154.1; 154.4.

14 See Ramelli (2006; forthcoming\_d).

15 *SVF* 1.170.

16 *Comp.* 1, 15, 22, 32, 35.

17 *SVF* 1.103.

(meaning “ram,” the head of the flock) symbolizes the hegemonic; Hyperion is the movement on high, ὑπεράνω ἰέναι.<sup>18</sup> Such etymological exegeses appear again in Chrysippus, Apollodorus, Crates, and Cornutus.<sup>19</sup> Zeno also applied textual emendations to Homer, as later Stoics did.<sup>20</sup>

Zeno’s successor, Cleanthes, in his exegesis of Homer availed himself of both textual emendations (*SVF* 1.535) and etymologies<sup>21</sup> in support of his allegorico-philosophical interpretation of the most ancient and authoritative Greek poet.<sup>22</sup> Like Chrysippus later, Cleanthes “endeavoured to reconcile with the Stoic theories the traditions going back to Orpheus, Musaeus, and the works by Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, and other poets.”<sup>23</sup> Cleanthes’ exegesis of Homer was not exclusively allegorico-etymological, but prevalently so. For instance, he explained Zeus’s properties through a *lectio continua* of *Iliad* 16.233: instead of “Zeus, lord of Dodona” (ἄνα Δωδωναίε), he read “Zeus Anadodonaeus” (Ἀναδωδωναίε), from the “exhalation” (ἀνάδοσις), as though he were air exhaling from the earth, or because of his donation (ἀνάδοσις) of goods.<sup>24</sup> Here Cleanthes joined Homeric philology to etymological allegoresis.<sup>25</sup> In the service of ethical allegoresis is Cleanthes’ etymology of the *moly* herb – given by Hermes to Odysseus to protect him from spells – from μολύω, “weaken.” The herb thus symbolizes the “weakening of impulses and passions.” The reference ethical system is obviously Stoic, as is clear from the distinction between impulses (ὀρμαί) and passions (πάθη), which can derive from the former.

Cleanthes also addressed issues concerning the life of Homer, like later Apollodorus, Crates, Heraclitus the Grammarian, and the author of the *Life and Poetry of Homer*. He dealt with Homer’s father and his birthplace.<sup>26</sup> To illustrate his own ideas, Cleanthes often quoted Homeric verses, such as *Odyssey* 4.611 on nobility, which Cleanthes meant as the moral loftiness of those who understand the value of labour (πόνος), which he exalted also in his exegesis of Heracles.<sup>27</sup> Cleanthes viewed poetry as the most suitable means to express the sublimity of the divine.<sup>28</sup> In *SVF* 1.482 he divides philosophy not

18 *SVF* I 100.

19 Chrysippus *SVF* 2.1086;1090; Apollodorus *FGH* 244, F354; Crates F23 Broggiato; Cornutus 17.

20 E.g., in *Od.* 4.84 (*SVF* 1.275.1).

21 E.g., *SVF* 1.549; 1.526.

22 Ramelli (2004) ch. 2.3; relevant texts and commentaries in Ramelli (2007) ch. 1.3.

23 *SVF* 1.539 = Philodemus *De pietate* 13.

24 *SVF* 1.535.

25 So also in *SVF* 1.549, on *Od.* 1.52.

26 *SVF* 1.592.

27 *SVF* 1.514.

28 *SVF* 1.486; 1.538.

simply into logic, physics, and ethics, according to the standard Stoic division, but into six parts, by duplication: dialectic and rhetoric, ethics and politics, and physics and theology. Here, physics and theology are distinguished from one another but are also reciprocally related. Indeed, in Stoic immanentism, physics ultimately coincides with theology, and Cleanthes considers the objects of physics and theology as coextensive, therefore allegorizing deities as physical elements. For example, a physical reduction of a theological element is the identification of Zeus with the aether;<sup>29</sup> this exegesis, taken over by *SVF* 2.1061 (according to the “physical interpretation,” Zeus is the “eternal authority [*potestas*] of the gods, because it is the aether, the highest of all elements”) and repeatedly found in the Homeric scholia, is one of the most stable in all of the Stoic tradition. However, Cleanthes distinguishes theology from physics as disciplines: theology explains the universe, conceived as a mystery; deities are regarded as mystical figures and myths as endowed with a peculiar epistemological status. For myths are expressed symbolically – a loftier form than the discursive *logos* – which calls for an allegorical exegesis. This is why allegoresis is part and parcel of philosophy, and particularly of theology, the highest part of philosophy.

Given the importance of poetry for Cleanthes, it comes as no surprise that he paid much attention to allegorising the deity of poetry, Apollo, his name, epithets, and attributes in ancient myths, often using etymology.<sup>30</sup> Apollo derives from ἀπ’ ἄλλων καὶ ἄλλον, because the sun rises from different places.<sup>31</sup> His epithet Loxias (Oblique) refers to the slantedness of the sun’s orbit and its movement in the Zodiac.<sup>32</sup> Apollo is called Lykios “because, as wolfs [λύκοι] take away sheep, so does the sun take away dampness by its rays.”<sup>33</sup> The golden plectrum, attributed to Apollo for his poetic and musical activity, is allegorised by Cleanthes again in a physical sense, with reference to the light of the sun.<sup>34</sup> Persephone is the part of the *pneuma* that extends itself (φερόμενον) and is consumed (φονεύμενον) through the fruits, according to the Stoic notion of the deities as partial manifestations of the supreme, unique divinity that extends everywhere.<sup>35</sup>

29 Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.5

30 *SVF* 1.540–543; 1.502.

31 *SVF* 1.540 = Macr. *Sat.* 1.17.8.

32 *SVF* 1.542. So also Cornutus later (32).

33 *SVF* 1.541.

34 *SVF* 1.502.2. Cf. Cornutus (32).

35 *SVF* 1.547; so again in the treatise of Stoic allegoresis inserted by Cicero in *De natura deorum* 2 (2.26.66); Cornutus (38); and Heraclitus, *Homeric Allegories* 74.

Chrysippus, too, especially in *On Divinities* 2, applied allegoresis to ancient poets such as Homer, Orpheus, Musaeus, and Hesiod. He offered the first theory of Stoic allegoresis in *On Divinities* 1.<sup>36</sup> Here, he explained the relationship of allegory to theology, the latter as expressed in poetry, rituals, iconography, and religious traditions in general. The Logos is expressed in different ways by philosophers, poets, and institutors of laws and customs in various cities, including rituals: “Those who have handed down the worship of the gods have presented it to us in three forms: first, the physical form; second, the mythical form [τοῦ μυθικοῦ]; and third, the form attested by laws and customs. Now, the physical form is taught by philosophers, the mythical one by poets [ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν], and the normative one is established by individual cities.”<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, poetry, including Homeric poetry, which narrates religious myths, has to be interpreted allegorically to reveal the truth that it hides under a veil. Of course, the truth revealed by allegorising Homer and other ancient texts and traditions turns out to dovetail with the philosophical truth of Stoicism. Chrysippus's theory entails that allegory is an essential feature of theology, and consequently of philosophy. It supplies the crucial connection between theology and physics, which is the core of the Stoic immanentistic system. For Chrysippus, allegory is the chief method to study theology, in its various traditional forms, and relate it to physics and ethics. Consequently, allegory becomes a major instrument of cultural unity – valued by Chrysippus, with his exceptionally vast cultural interests.<sup>38</sup> Seneca and Galen criticised Chrysippus's use of Homer and other ancient poets in support of his philosophical arguments.<sup>39</sup> Chrysippus made such a staggering use of Homer and other ancient poets because, from his perspective, they were sources of philosophical truths expressed symbolically. For the same reason, another Stoic leader, Antipater of Tarsus, shortly after Chrysippus regularly brought in quotations from ancient poets while discussing philosophical arguments.<sup>40</sup>

Significantly, Chrysippus's main allegorical work is not found in a treatise on poetry or literature, but in his theologico-philosophical masterpieces, *On Divinities* and *On Nature*. This confirms that Stoic allegoresis is part and parcel of philosophy. In *On Divinities* 1 Chrysippus allegorised the various deities as natural elements or moral notions; in *On Divinities* 2 he focussed on poets,

36 Ramelli (2004) ch. 2.4; (2007) ch. 1.4, with the relevant texts and commentaries.

37 SVF 2.1009.

38 On Stoic Homeric allegory as an instrument of cultural unity see below.

39 See Ramelli (2004) section on Seneca. On Seneca's use of metaphors see Gazzarri 2020.

40 E.g., in SVF 3.3.63, an excerpt from his treatise *On Marriage*, within a few lines one finds one quotation from Sophocles, two from Euripides, and two from unidentified comic poets. See Ramelli (2016).



including Homer, and through allegoresis showed that they expressed a theology that coincided with Stoic philosophy.<sup>41</sup> An Academic philosopher speaking in Cicero's *De natura deorum*<sup>42</sup> criticises Chrysippus's etymologico-allegorical rationalisation on the charge of destroying religious traditions by claiming that gods are not really gods but natural realities (*rerum naturae*). Chrysippus rather aimed at valuing religious traditions expressed in Homer and elsewhere, but a similar criticism from the Epicurean side comes from Philodemus: "Some even speak quite foolishly, such as those who assert that both Homeric poems deal with the cosmos and human laws and customs."<sup>43</sup>

Zeus was allegorised by Chrysippus both physically, as aether, and ethically, as the eternal moral law and fate. All deities are in Zeus under the form of Zeus, or in Hera under the form of Hera, on the basis of the Anaxagorean principle "all in all" (πάντα ἐν πᾶσι).<sup>44</sup> Zeus as fiery, intelligent, and eternal aether fits well with the Stoic doctrine of cosmic conflagration, of which Chrysippus spoke in *On Deities* 3 and elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> The other deities are corruptible because they symbolise the other natural elements that in the conflagration are dissolved, while Zeus-aether-Providence endures.<sup>46</sup> Chrysippus in *Physics* and *On Providence* represented Zeus as Intellect, Fate, Soul, and Logos, seminal reason of the cosmos with a potential for infinite transformations.<sup>47</sup> Other passages confirm the identification of Zeus with Fate, Providence, Intellect, Logos, Justice, and cosmic law, thus as both physical and ethical principle.<sup>48</sup> Many fragments confirm Chrysippus's use of etymology in his allegoresis of Zeus, for instance Δία (the accusative of the name Zeus) from διὰ, "because of," since Zeus is the supreme cause of all, or from διοικέω, "to govern," because Fate governs all.

The fraternal and nuptial relationship between Zeus-aether and Hera-air was explained by Chrysippus with the affinity of these two elements and their contiguity in the structure of the cosmos.<sup>49</sup> Within his Homeric exegesis, probably in *On Divinities* 2, Chrysippus allegorised the relationship between Zeus and Hera and her enchainment by a golden chain representing the fire

41 SVF 2.1077; 1078.

42 3.24.63 (SVF 2.1069).

43 Philodemus, *Poetics*, Voll. Hercul.<sup>2</sup>, 11.147 + 7.90.

44 SVF 3.302; 2.1061. For the Platonic reception of this principle see Ramelli (2020) 54–62.

45 SVF 2.1050; cf. 2.1049.1.

46 SVF 2.1049.2; 2.1064.

47 SVF 2.580; 2.604 = Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 39.1052C, from Chrysippus's *On Providence* 1.

48 SVF 2.632; 2.929; 2.937.2; 2.1076; 3.326.

49 SVF 2.1075; 2.622; 2.1070.

of aether because air joins aether in its loftiest part.<sup>50</sup> The two anvils hanging from her feet symbolize earth and sea, located under the air. The Homeric myth of Hera's enchainment and Hephaestus's fall will be allegorised in an identical way by Cornutus (17), Heraclitus the Grammarian, the *Life and Poetry of Homer*, and even Porphyry.<sup>51</sup>

Chrysippus's allegorisation of Athena as wisdom or an act of thought is also based on etymologies of her name and epithets. *Qua* wisdom, Chrysippus attaches to her the tripartition of Stoic philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. Chrysippus's exegesis passed on to his disciple Diogenes of Babylon, in his treatise *On Athena* (see below). All the elements of Chrysippus's allegoresis of Athena will appear again in Cornutus (20): the identification as wisdom, its origin from the hegemonic, the reference of her epithet Tritogeneia to the tripartition of philosophy. Justin will still allegorise Athena as the first act of thought and Origen as prudence and practical wisdom (φρόνησις).<sup>52</sup> Apollo is also a favourite of Chrysippus. His etymology from *a-polloi*, "not many" but one,<sup>53</sup> will also enjoy much popularity for a long time, also because of the crucial philosophical resonances of the concept of "one." Hephaestus represents fire and the Homeric myth of his being cast into the sea was interpreted by Chrysippus in reference to the transformation of fire into air and air into water.<sup>54</sup> Some mythological beings, according to Chrysippus, were invented by Homer or other poets, for instance, the Giants and the Centaurs, which are among the realities that are the object of thought but do not exist.<sup>55</sup> The traditional inspirers of Homer and the other ancient poets, the Muses, were allegorised etymologically by Chrysippus, for instance, Euterpe from delighting (τέρπειν) those who listen to her with the goods of culture.

A series of fragments, mostly coming from Homeric scholia,<sup>56</sup> show how Chrysippus commented on Homer also opting for textual emendations or variants that best suited his own interpretations. Aristarchus's exegesis of Homer will often be at odds with that of Chrysippus and his follower Crates of Mallus.<sup>57</sup> Sometimes Chrysippus simply explained the meaning of a

50 *Sch. \*BD in Il.* 15.21, with reference to *Il.* 15.18–21.

51 Heracl. *Hom. All.* 23; 40; *Vit. Poes. Hom.* 97; Eustathius *In Il.* 15.19, 1003.8; Porph. *Quaest. Hom.* *Il.* 15.19.

52 *1Apol.* 64; *Cels.* 8.67.

53 *SVF* 2.1095.

54 *Sch. \*BD in Il.* 15.21.

55 *SVF* 2.332.2.

56 *SVF* 3.769–777.

57 *Sch. in Il.* 1.129; *in Il.* 5.906; *in Il.* 1.405; *in Il.* 8.441; *in Il.* 5.240; *in Il.* 15.241; *in Il.* 13.41; *in Il.* 22.212.

difficult Homeric sentence,<sup>58</sup> or used etymology, for example of Alastor, in his Homeric exegesis.<sup>59</sup>

Chrysippus repeatedly cited Homer also in *On Fate* 1, in support of his Stoic thesis that everything happens according to necessity and Fate.<sup>60</sup> In matters of ethics, Chrysippus in *On Virtues* also cited Homer to argue that true nobility, Stoically, depends on virtue and not on birth.<sup>61</sup> Likewise Chrysippus's definition of the *pathos* of resentment was illustrated by two Homeric verses;<sup>62</sup> his whole *On Passions* (Περὶ παθῶν) indeed teemed with quotations from Homer as well as Euripides.<sup>63</sup> Homer was even quoted in favour of frugality in banquets, which his heroes prepared by themselves.<sup>64</sup> Even Chrysippus's cosmology was supported by Homeric quotations, for instance, about the nature of air.<sup>65</sup> This use of Homer in support of various disciplines perfectly suited the idea that Homer was an expert in various fields of knowledge, a concept that will feature prominently in Crates of Mallus, Heraclitus the Grammarian, and Ps.-Plutarch, as we shall see.

## 2 Diogenes of Babylon, Apollodorus, and Crates of Mallus

Stoic allegorists indeed attached to Homer the knowledge and veiled expression of philosophical and scientific truths. This position was criticised, for instance, by contemporaries of Crates of Mallus.<sup>66</sup> But Crates held Homer in high esteem as a poet competent in various disciplines – like Crates himself, who designated himself a “critic” (κριτικός) as an expert in philology, linguistics, and literature within the Stoic philosophical system, as will be pointed out soon. Crates was probably, and Apollodorus of Athens was certainly, a disciple of Diogenes of Babylon, in turn a disciple of Chrysippus.<sup>67</sup>

Diogenes devoted a treatise, *Athena*, to the allegorical analysis of myths, names, and attributes of this goddess. His physical interpretation of the divinities continues the Stoic tradition of Chrysippus: Zeus represents the cosmos

58 *Sch. in Il.* 10.252.

59 *SVF* 2.156–158.

60 *SVF* 2.925.1–3.

61 *SVF* 3.350: *Il.* 2.231; *Od.* 8.308–309.

62 *Il.* 2.81–82 in *SVF* 3.396.

63 E.g., in Book 2 Chrysippus quoted *Od.* 4.541 and *Il.* 24.514 (*SVF* 3.467). *Od.* 4.103 was quoted to illustrate the transformation of passions.

64 *Od.* 15.332; *Il.* 9.202; 209; *Od.* 15.141: *SVF* 3.707.

65 *Od.* 9.143; *Il.* 17.649 (*SVF* 2.430).

66 See Ramelli (2004) ch. 3; (2007) ch. 1, sections on Apollodorus and Crates.

67 *SVF* 3/2.1.35.

and is at the same time its soul (qua *logos* and hegemonic); the part of Zeus that spreads into the sea is Poseidon, that which spreads into the air is Hera, and that which spreads into the aether, the highest element, is Athena; this is why the ancient myth symbolically represents the latter as born from Zeus's head, the highest part of the cosmos.<sup>68</sup> Athena is intelligence and her epithets, At(h)rena, Tritonia, and Tritogeneia, refer to the Stoic tripartition of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic. In his work *On Music* Diogenes often used etymology in the service of allegory, for instance, accepting the derivation of θεός, "god," from θεῖν, "to run," already present in Plato's *Cratylus*, to which Diogenes seems to prefer the etymology from θεάω / θεωρέω, "I contemplate."<sup>69</sup> Music was named after the Muses, and since music facilitates the virtue of love [ἐρωτική], one of the Muses was called Erato.<sup>70</sup>

The mythological *Library* of Diogenes' disciple, Apollodorus of Athens, was a "sanitising" of Hesiod's *Theogony* according to Stephen Scully,<sup>71</sup> but surely Apollodorus was interested in the exegesis of Homer as well. For his Homeric exegesis, Apollodorus, who worked at the Library of Alexandria, had at his disposal many commentaries on Homer and other poets, besides the works of mythographers and those by Chrysippus and Diogenes of Babylon. He was very well steeped in Stoic Homeric allegoresis. He also composed a commentary in 12 books on the *Iliad's Catalogue of the Ships*.<sup>72</sup> It is from lexica, scholia, and commentaries on Homer that most fragments of his 24 books *On Divinities* derive. Like the homonymous work of Chrysippus, Apollodorus's treatise was devoted to the allegorical interpretation of ancient poetical, iconographical, and cultic traditions concerning deities. Photius details that Apollodorus interpreted also myths about heroes, the Dioscuri, Hades, etc.<sup>73</sup> Heraclitus the Grammarian will call Apollodorus, his source, "a man extraordinarily competent in every myth."<sup>74</sup> In accordance with Stoic theology, Apollodorus remarked: "it is impossible to find a proper denomination of the divinity, or a precise knowledge of its nature, because philosophers represent its substance sometimes as male and sometimes as female. But they have named the deities according to what they do, representing creative powers as gods and powers that generate life as goddesses."<sup>75</sup> Homer called Amphitrite both "screaming"

68 SVF 3.2.33.

69 Fr. 64.

70 SVF 3/2.72;78.

71 Scully (2015) 148–150.

72 T12–14.

73 T11.

74 T10 = Heracl. *Hom.All.* 7 (cf. Fg8).

75 F117.

and “illustrious” because screaming is the sea, illustrious the goddess.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, Homer depicted the earth both as a goddess and as an element.<sup>77</sup>

Apollodorus, like his Stoic predecessors, applied etymology to his Homeric allegoresis, as is indicated by his *Etymologies* and many passages from *On Divinities*. Zeus’s epithet Dodonaeus depended on the donation of goods, and Pelasgicus on Zeus’s closeness (πέλας) to the earth.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, in *On Divinities* 13–14, Apollodorus interpreted many appellatives of Apollo and Poseidon. Golden Hair comes from the brightness of the sun’s rays; Uncut Hair refers to the impossibility of cutting rays away from the sun; Silver Bow refers to the arcuate orbit of the sun.<sup>79</sup> The Homeric epithet of Apollo, Χρυσάωρ, alludes to the sun’s golden light.<sup>80</sup> Apollodorus’s elaborate interpretation of Apollo very likely influenced both Cornutus and Heraclitus the Grammarian, and, later on, even Macrobius.<sup>81</sup> In turn, he situates himself squarely within the Chrysippean allegorico-etymological tradition. Only rarely, such as in the etymology of Alastor, does Apollodorus diverge from Chrysippus.<sup>82</sup> The Geneva Scholia to the *Iliad* often report Homeric exegeses from Apollodorus’s work *On Divinities*.<sup>83</sup>

He applied the allegorico-etymological method also to other deities, especially Athena, the subject of his teacher Diogenes’ masterpiece. Apollodorus shared with Diogenes the allegoresis of Athena as intelligence and contemplative faculty, as well as some etymological associations, such as that between γλαύξ (“little owl,” Athena’s bird) and the verb γλαύσσω, “to observe,” with reference to the sight of intelligence. This is also the reason why the serpent (δράκων) was an attribute of Athena, being connected with δέρνω, another synonym of ὀθρέω, “I observe,” whence also “Athena.”<sup>84</sup> In the case of Athena, but also of Aphrodite and Hermes, Apollodorus insisted that divine epithets in Homer did not derive from geographic places or other extrinsic elements, but from the deity’s intrinsic characteristics. Due to his basic identification of Hermes with the Logos, Apollodorus attached to him rational activities such

76 F355 on *Od.* 12.96; 5.421.

77 Apollodorus cites *Il.* 19.259; 15.37; 11.425; 15.36.

78 F88, with reference to *Il.* 16.233, interpreted by Cleanthes, *SVF* 1.535.1 (see above).

79 F95.

80 F\*98: χρυσῶν.

81 *Sat.* 1.17. Both Macrobius and Cornutus seem to derive from Apollodorus F95. See Ramelli (2007) ch. 3.1.5.

82 F150a.

83 Other 27 fragments, mostly from lexicā and scholia, focus on the epithets of Apollo: F99b–99g.

84 F354.18.

as literature, music, and geometry.<sup>85</sup> His epithet Κυλλήνιος, attested in the *Homeric Hymns*, was traced to Hermes' connection with sleep, already emphasised by Chrysippus: he "holds the reins of the inferior eyelids" (κύλων / κυλάδων ἡνίας).<sup>86</sup>

In *On Divinities* 20, Apollodorus offered a long etymologico-allegorical analysis of Hades and all its rivers. He derived the name Pyrphlegethon from the fact that the dead are burnt by fire (πυρὶ φλέγεται), and to illustrate this idea he quoted *Od.* 11.218–221 and 476 about the dead. Apollodorus discussed thoroughly all the aspects of Hades, the distribution of souls therein, and the like, especially on the basis of Homer. He also polemicised against Aristarchus as a Homeric exegete, as Crates too did. Apollodorus's allegoresis of Hades was received by Cornutus (35) and Heraclitus in his *Homeric Allegories* (74).

His above-mentioned commentary on the *Catalogue of the Ships* in Book 2 of the *Iliad*, of which many fragments are extant,<sup>87</sup> is replete with historical and antiquarian information, with frequent identifications of peoples and toponyms, discussions of textual questions, quotations from earlier philologists, many etymologies, and some remarks about the principles of Homeric exegesis. Apollodorus accepted partially the thesis of Homer's polymathy, which was to become prominent in Crates and Heraclitus the Grammarian, as we shall see. He regarded Homer as an authority in matters of theology. In the Prologue to Book 2 Apollodorus praised Eratosthenes, according to whom Homer knew Greece well, but not far-away lands. This is why in Book 2 he considered fictitious the strange peoples mentioned by Homer, such as Pygmies, Steganopodes, and Cynocephali.<sup>88</sup> Apollodorus, however, did attribute many competences to Homer – a trend followed by Crates.

Crates of Mallus (†145 BCE), the head of the School of Pergamum and a contemporary of the Alexandrian Aristarchus,<sup>89</sup> disagreed with the latter in the analogy-anomaly debate and concerning Homeric exegesis. In 168/7 BCE he was sent by Attalus of Pergamum to Rome, where he introduced grammatical studies.<sup>90</sup> He had recourse to both textual emendation and allegoresis in his exegesis of Homer and other ancient poets, to whom he attributed geographical and cosmological expertise – a conviction later expressed also by the

85 F129.

86 F130.

87 F154–207.

88 F157.

89 Diog. Laert. 4.23.

90 Suetonius, *On Grammarians* 2.

geographer Strabo<sup>91</sup> and, as we shall see, Stoicising Homeric allegorists of the imperial age. But whereas Crates always regarded Homer as wise and an expert in many disciplines, he did not always regard Euripides in this way.

Crates wrote a commentary on Homer under the title, *Rectification* (Διόρθωσις) of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in nine books, in a polemic against Aristarchus and his followers. He even inserted an Orphic text into the *Iliad*.<sup>92</sup> Philodemus preserves long fragments of Crates about poetry,<sup>93</sup> in which influences from Stoic theories are apparent. Crates, indeed, is identified in the *Suda*, K2342, as a Stoic. Crates also dealt with the life and chronology of Homer,<sup>94</sup> as Heraclitus the Grammarian and Ps. Plutarch will do (see below). Homeric scholia also attest to his *Homerica*, which may or may not coincide with the *Rectification*. Crates' emendations to the Homeric text were sometimes limited to a different division of words or different accents, or dictated by a "rationalising" intention, such as the correction of "nine days" into "one day" in reference to the gods' destruction of Troy's fortification, which had been built by humans in just one day.<sup>95</sup> Examples of etymological and aetiological interpretations of Homeric toponyms or names of heroes abound in Crates' fragments.<sup>96</sup>

According to Dio Chrysostom,<sup>97</sup> Crates in his *Homerica* interpreted the meaning underlying the Homeric text, and we shall see that he often did so allegorically. Strabo attests that "some, such as Crates and other exegetes, convinced of the poet's multiple disciplinary competences, wanted to see in Homer's poetry a series of scientific theories."<sup>98</sup> Crates deemed Homer an expert especially in astronomy and geography, and allegorised Homeric passages consequently.<sup>99</sup> Crates agreed, however, with the Stoic Perseus, another allegorist of Homer, that Achilles in the *Iliad* does not embody Stoic virtues such as courage.<sup>100</sup> By allegorising Homer, Crates presupposed that Homer had access to the truth. Like Cornutus (below), indeed, he presupposed that the ancients had access to the truth and expressed it symbolically. Crates significantly searched for the

91 Strabo deemed Homer the "founder of the science of geography" (1.1.2), but he named certain locations in a "riddling way," by means of certain signs and hints (1.1.3); some, failing to grasp Homer's allegorical technique, have cast doubt on his learning in geography.

92 Plutarch, *De facie* 25.938D. Already Plato, *Crat.* 402BC joined *Il.* 14.201, Hesiod, *Theog.* 337 and an Orphic verse.

93 F94–101.

94 F73.

95 F16.

96 E.g., F8.

97 F74 = Dio *Or.* 53.1.

98 F75 = Strabo 3.4.4.

99 F76.

100 F2.

most primitive redaction of the *Iliad*, and in his *Rectification* quoted v. 1 of this (postulated) extremely ancient poem.<sup>101</sup>

Crates was so interested in Homeric allegories that he used a specific diacritical mark to signal the allegorical passages. Crates' strictly allegorical fragments are six of physical allegoresis, one of ethical allegoresis, and one of "mixed" allegoresis. F2, with ethical allegoresis, shows that for Crates Achilles was a model of Pythagorean wisdom. This matches Crates' tendency to attribute to Homer every knowledge, including philosophical competences. Unlike Plato, therefore, Crates thought, with the Stoics, that Homer could be a good teacher, of both virtue and knowledge. Crates also interpreted *Iliad* 13.358–360 by minutely clarifying a metaphor, called "mixed allegory."<sup>102</sup>

Among the examples of Stoic physical allegoresis of Homer, Hephaestus's fall from Olympus is allegorised by Crates as a measuring of the cosmos by means of two fires, represented by Hephaestus and Apollo-Sun. Thus, Homer "said nothing impious about Hephaestus" (F3) – a line that will be further developed by the so-called *Homerapologeten* such as Heraclitus, the source of F3, and Ps.-Plutarch (see below). Zeus symbolises heaven, air, and aether.<sup>103</sup> Agamemnon's shield is a representation of the whole cosmos,<sup>104</sup> in conformity with Crates' attribution of geographical and astronomical knowledge to Homer. The doves that bring ambrosia to Zeus are identified with the Pleiades, due to an etymological wordplay.<sup>105</sup> Crates used etymology in non-allegorical contexts as well, including in the clarification of Homeric textual problems – like the Alexandrian philologists. But often etymology is in the service of allegoresis, as in the case of the Stoic allegorists. For instance, the accusative case of the name Zeus, Δία, was connected by Crates to διαίνειν, "to moisten," or διήκειν, "to pervade" (F130), with reference to Zeus's allegory as sky, aether, and all-pervading principle, which Crates derived from the Stoa (F131).

Philodemus also attests that Crates attributed to Homer the theory of the sphericity of the cosmos, with the earth at its centre.<sup>106</sup> Philodemus connects this interpretation to Stoic allegoresis, and Geminus does not approve of it: "Crates puts forward paradoxical arguments when he transposes [μετάγει] what Homer expressed in an archaic and rude manner into the true

101 F1.

102 F18.

103 F31.

104 F12.

105 F59. Crates, here called *kritikos*, seems to have used as a source the female scholar Mero of Byzantium in her *Mnemosyne*.

106 Σφαιροποιία or spheropy, spherical structure of the cosmos: F 96\*–101.



spheropy.”<sup>107</sup> Crates performed an illicit transposition of Homer’s poetic expressions into the scientific cosmology of his day. According to Crates, for instance, *Odyssey* 10.82–86 alludes to the regions on earth where nights are extremely short, which presupposes the sphericity of the earth, and Homer knew the polar regions where, on account of the bending of the earth, nights last six months.<sup>108</sup>

In order to support Homer’s polymathy, Crates even introduced some philological emendations.<sup>109</sup> After *Iliad* 14.246 (“the Ocean, which has been the origin of all”), he inserted another verse, which expressed his own, Stoic geographic view of the earth as mostly covered by water: “and flows on the greatest part of the earth” (F20). For the same reason he rejected the expunction of *Iliad* 21.195: “nor the great force of Ocean deep stream” (F29), claiming that Homer knew what the physicists later explained. Crates was also convinced that on earth there are four continents, geometrically arranged, and ascribed to Homer the knowledge of the southern hemisphere. Crates also adapted *Odyssey* 1.23–24, and many other Homeric verses, to this theory.<sup>110</sup> He attached to Homer the theory of the symmetrical division of the inhabited world into known peoples, *perioikoi*, *antoikoi*, and antipodes.<sup>111</sup>

With reference to Homeric cosmology, Crates knew and cited Agathocles of Cyzicus (third-second c. BCE), a disciple of Zenodotus who, like Crates, looked for Stoic cosmology in Homer’s text. Aristarchus, who was a contemporary of Crates and polemicised against him, entertained a different view of Homer’s cosmos: a series of levels superimposed to one another, with the earth as a flat surface circumscribed by the Ocean (conceived as a river rather than as a huge sea) under which there is Hades, and further below Tartarus. Over the earth, instead, there are the planes of air, aether, and heaven.

Crates also claimed that Homer was aware of mathematic and statistic theories.<sup>112</sup> He interpreted “in a most philosophical way”<sup>113</sup> the Homeric expression *θοῇ νύξ*, “speedy night,” by explaining that “the night, being the shadow of the earth, moves at the same speed as the sun, as though it were running after the sun and the sun were running after the night.” Heraclitus the Grammarian will take up this interpretive line. The cosmological view underlying this

<sup>107</sup> F37.

<sup>108</sup> F54 on *Odyssey* 11.14–19.

<sup>109</sup> F20; F27.

<sup>110</sup> F37; cf. F57 = Strabo 1.1.7, where Crates also cites *Il.* 7.422, *Od.* 19.434; *Il.* 18.399, *Od.* 20.65; *Il.* 14.245–246; 18.606; *Od.* 11.639; 1–2.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Strabo 1.5; Cleomedes *Astronomica* 1–20 B.

<sup>112</sup> See, e.g., F48 on *Odyssey* 9.60.

<sup>113</sup> *Μάλιστα φιλοσόφως*, F11.

conception is also echoed in the treatise of Stoic allegoresis found in Book 2 of Cicero's *De natura deorum* (2.19.49).

Crates and his followers were at odds with the Alexandrian Homeric philologists not only from the viewpoint of the attribution of polymathy to Homer and of the use of allegoresis for the interpretation of the Homeric poems, but also in the linguistic and literary dispute concerning analogy or anomaly. The Alexandrians, such as Zenodotus, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus, often changed the Homeric text with normalising conjectures, and refused to apply physical or ethical allegoresis to Homer.<sup>114</sup> For instance, in *Iliad* 9.464 Aristarchus emended the reading of all manuscripts in a normalising sense, whereas Crates defended the *lectio tradita*. Zeno already offered an example of this tendency to avoid altering Homer's text unless strictly necessary.<sup>115</sup> Crates altered Homer's text sparingly, and not due to analogistic, normalising tendencies, but, as mentioned, in order to adapt it to his theory of Homer's polymathy and to the needs of allegoresis. Crates' and the Pergamum school's anomalistic tendency, indeed, implied different philological choices (F105) and had a Stoic matrix, especially from Chrysippus (F104).

Strabo contrasts Crates' and Aristarchus's views on Homer's polymathy and, as a consequence, their exegetical methods: "Some, such as Crates of Mallus and others, giving credit to these stories, and convinced that Homer was an expert in many disciplines [πολυμαθία], interpreted allegorically his poetry as containing scientific theories in a veiled form [ἐπιστημονικᾶς ὑποθέσεις]. Others, instead, were so hostile to this approach that not only did they deny that Homer possessed any scientific knowledge [ἐπιστήμη], as though he were a peasant, but they also considered fools those who stuck to such an interpretive method."<sup>116</sup> Among the latter was Aristarchus. Strabo styled himself a Stoic: he called the Stoics in general, and Zeno in particular, "ours."<sup>117</sup>

Unlike the Alexandrians, Crates maintained that grammar, philology, and logic had to be studied within a philosophical framework. He "claimed that the critic [κριτικός] is different from the grammarian/philologist [γραμματικός]: the critic must be an expert of *every aspect of the science of logic*, whereas the philologist limits himself to explaining the linguistic expressions, giving an account of prosody, and being competent in similar questions. This is why Crates also assimilated the critic to an architect, but the philologist to a

114 *Scholia on the Iliad* 5.385 and 2.494; Eustathius, *On the Iliad* 3.23.

115 *SVF* 1.275, Strabo 1.41.

116 Strabo 3.157 = F75.

117 1.2.3 and 1.2.34.

servant.”<sup>118</sup> The architect has a global vision of what is being done, whereas servants, attendants, and paid workers just perform a particular task under the architect’s direction. Critics must anchor their philological and linguistic knowledge to the science of logic – one of the three branches of philosophy according to the Stoics. This is consistent with the multiple philosophical and scientific competences required by the kind of Homeric exegesis that Crates applied. It is no chance that Crates’ linguistic theories were inspired, not by a philologist-grammarians, but by a philosopher, Chrysippus, with his *De anomalia*, which was included in his works of logic.

Crates sometimes applied also a historical, rationalising exegesis to Homer’s myths – which, unlike allegoresis, does not imply per se Homer’s polymathy. Some examples of his historical exegesis even possess euhemeristic overtones: he interpreted Cronus as a tyrant who reigned over Sicily, Italy, and Libya. His son Zeus attacked him and chased him to the extreme West and reigned with wisdom and moderation; this is why he was honoured like a god (F129).

Crates, then, like Apollodorus, had a very wide range of interests, which fits well within the Stoic Chrysippean line. This aimed at creating a broad, organic unity of knowledge, anchored to physics-theology, logic, and ethics.<sup>119</sup> Here allegoresis played a prominent role. Another remarkable result yielded by a careful investigation into Stoic Homeric allegoresis is that Crates and Apollodorus represent an important bridge, within Stoicism, between the so-called *Homerapologeten*, such as Heraclitus the Grammarian and Ps.-Plutarch (see below), and the allegorists of theological myths, notably Homeric myths, such as the ancient Stoics and the Roman Stoic Cornutus, whom I am going to address now.

### 3 Imperial Stoicism: Cornutus, Homer, and the Ancients

Stoic Homeric allegoresis continued along the lines of Chrysippus, Apollodorus, and Crates in Roman imperial times. In Nero’s age a Roman Stoic, Annaeus Cornutus, both a philosopher and a teacher of philosophy, composed in Greek a handbook of Greek theology, which seems to have been influenced by Apollodorus.<sup>120</sup> In the conclusion he claims that the ancients, among whom

<sup>118</sup> F94 = Sextus Empiricus *Adv. math.* 1.79. See also *Suda* Φ 332: Philitas too was a *kritikos*, an interpreter of Homer, who sometimes also intervened philologically on Homer’s text.

<sup>119</sup> See also below the section, *Stoic Homeric Allegoresis: Beyond the Apologetic Function*.

<sup>120</sup> *Compendium theologiae Graecae*; Ἐπιδρομή τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑλληνικὴν θεολογίαν παραδεδομένων, *Survey of the traditions of Greek theology*, on which see Ramelli (2003; 2004: ch. 6; 2014); Torres 2018; Boys-Stones 2018, my review *CJ* 2020.08.07.

primarily Homer, were able to understand the nature of the cosmos (συνιέναι τὴν τοῦ κόσμου φύσιν) and had the ability to *philosophize on it* by means of symbols and enigmata (διὰ συμβόλων καὶ αἰνιγμάτων φιλοσοφῆσαι).<sup>121</sup> Cornutus declares the ancients to be *philosophers*, since they were endowed with the understanding of what exists. What they expressed allegorically are philosophical truths. The task of the philosophers contemporary with Cornutus, and of course Stoics in his perspective, is to interpret Homer's and other ancients' expressions and find philosophical tenets there. Cornutus, indeed, supported the Stoic subsumption of allegoresis under philosophy, as a way of detecting the philosophical truths that the ancients hid in poetry, myths, and ritual traditions.

In his handbook Cornutus offers an allegorico-etymological interpretation of each divinity's names and epithets, attributes, aspects of myths and rituals, and the like. Physical allegory is prevalent, although there are also examples of ethical allegory. For instance, what Homer called Zeus is a symbol of the aether; Hera is an allegory of the air, and so on. For instance, in *Theol. Graec.* 2–3 Cornutus offers this résumé of Stoic Homeric allegoresis supported by etymology:<sup>122</sup>

Just as we are governed by a soul, so also does the cosmos possess a soul that keeps its cohesion, and this soul is called Zeus, because it lives (*zôsa*) primarily and everywhere, and it is the cause of life (*zên*) for the living beings (*zôntes*). This is also why Zeus is said to reign over all beings, in the same way as one could say that in us, too, the soul and our nature reign. We call him *Dia*, too, because thanks to (*dia*) him all realities come to existence and are kept in existence. Some people also call him *Deus*, perhaps because he soaks (*deuein*) the earth, or has living beings participate in (*metadidonai*) life-giving humidity. The genitive of this form is *Deos*, parallel to the genitive *Dios*. He is said to dwell in heaven, because there resides the most sovereign part of the soul of the cosmos; for our souls, too, are fire. As for his wife and sister, tradition has it that she is Hera, who is the air (*aêr*). For she turns out to be immediately joined with him, rising from the earth, while he is over her. And they were born from a flux in the same direction; indeed, by flowing toward fineness, the substance constitutes both fire and air.

121 *Theol. Graec.* 35. See Ramelli (2018).

122 I employ the edition by Ramelli (2003), which has some changes vis-à-vis Lang's edition, especially with regard to integrations and expunctions; both Torres and Boys-Stones used it.

Homeric poetry and other modes of transmission of ancient theology expressed truth symbolically, and the task of Stoic philosophical allegoresis is to decode those symbols. Such a task is philosophical, and precisely theological, insofar as its focus is the truth about nature and the divine. In Stoic immanentism, theology and physics (the study of the divinities and the study of nature) are two sides of the same coin, and the application of allegoresis to traditions handed down from antiquity reveals this.

Cornutus, like other Stoic Homeric allegorists, had extensive recourse to etymology in the service of philosophical allegoresis, but Stoic philosophical allegoresis cannot be reduced to the application of etymologies or a linguistic disambiguation exercise, any more than Philo's Scriptural allegoresis can be reduced to a mere etymological exercise, although etymology is a consistently deployed tool in Stoic Homeric allegoresis. Etymology was a constituent of the Stoic theory of language, according to which names are by nature – a view that could be traced back to Plato's *Cratylus*.<sup>123</sup> For the “first sounds” imitated the objects that the ancients experienced around them. Names were formed on this basis. The ancients are, again, those responsible for their constitution, and Stoic philosophical etymology is responsible for their interpretation, by detecting in words their first constituents and meanings. Thus, philosophical etymology provides the original, true (ἔτυμος) sense of words. On this basis etymology was considered to be a tool both for grasping the nature of deities, since etymology goes back to the authentic meaning of a name, and for showing how Homeric names and epithets of deities reflect their nature, thus revealing physical or (sometimes) ethical truths. This same nature is expressed allegorically in Homeric myths and other ancient myths. This shows that the allegoresis of Homeric and other ancient traditions can comprehend the truth, because, according to Stoic linguistics, etymology has a direct grasp on nature.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4 Stoic Homeric Allegoresis: Beyond the Apologetic Function

Stoic Homeric allegoresis does not seem to have had simply an “apologetic” role: it did not merely aim at supporting Stoic philosophy. This might have been the case in early Stoicism, but less so already in Chrysippus's time, and much less so in Cornutus's. The Stoics' exegesis of Homer was of course Stoic, as is clear for example from book 2 of Chrysippus's *On Divinities*, in which materials from Homer, Hesiod, and other poets were adapted to Stoic theology as expounded

123 Ramelli (2004) ch. 9.2.2, with documentation and critical debate.

124 See Ramelli (2004) ch. 9.

in book 1 of the same work. But the apologetic interpretation of Stoic Homeric allegoresis appears simplistic, in light of the fact that interest in Homeric allegoresis in Stoicism increased significantly over time, and likewise the Stoics' allegorical production, instead of diminishing, grew and grew. If Stoic allegoresis had been just intended to prove the truth of Stoic doctrines, one should expect that over time, when the Stoic system became consolidated and could stand by itself, Stoic interest in allegoresis of myths would rather decrease.

Moreover, in such a unified and structured system as the Stoic one, at a certain point the support of Homeric allegoresis would have inevitably become too unsystematic. Therefore, that Stoic allegoresis primarily served an apologetic agenda is unlikely. Rather, by allegorising Homer and other ancient myths and traditions, the Stoics aimed at integrating into their own philosophical system the ancient patrimony of traditional expressions of theology: poetic (particularly Homeric), cultic, and iconographic. They intended to create an overarching cultural synthesis, embracing the whole traditional heritage, now rendered philosophically legitimate, after being undermined by rationalism. Stoicism could thereby value the legacy of myth, in its traditional expressions – poetry, epithets, rituals, iconographic representations of deities, etc. – as a bearer of truth. The Stoics engaged in linguistics, etymology, poetry, and literature, as we have seen for instance in the cases of Chrysippus and Crates; this is why they wanted to salvage the legacy of Homeric poetry and other expressions of tradition by means of allegoresis.

Stoic Homeric allegoresis was likely intended to build a vast cultural unity based on the Logos. The whole of Stoic allegoresis focuses on the Logos. The different divinities are seen as partial manifestations of the same Logos-Pneuma; the Logos also inspired Homer and other ancient poets, the inventors of myths and rituals, and those ancients who created the 'natural' language that etymology explicates, to find truth in words. From Zeno to the early imperial age, the time of Heraclitus' *Homeric Allegories* and the pseudo-Plutarchean *Life and Poetry of Homer* (see below in the next section), Stoics continued to represent Homer as conversant with a variety of disciplines, especially physics and geography, besides all sorts of literary devices. This projected onto Homer and antiquity the Stoic ideal of a unity grounded in the Logos. The Stoic system itself was indeed distinctively monistic, holistic, and unitary, centered in the Logos-Pneuma – symbolized by Zeus – that extends to all nature and all thought and reasoning.

It is significant that in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, among the speeches delivered – the Epicurean in book 1, the Stoic in book 2, and the Academic in books 1 and 3 – the Stoic is by far the most extensive of all, and also includes

a much broader spectrum of disciplines than the others.<sup>125</sup> This reflects well the Stoic ideal of the construction of a wide-ranging cultural unit, revolving around theology and physics, and embracing logic, mathematics, physiology, cosmology, astronomy, ritual, legends, customs, traditions, poetry, rhetoric, linguistics, etymology, and more. For the Stoic allegorists, Homer and the ancients expressed philosophical truths under symbolic veils. A pivotal task of philosophy, according to the Stoics, was the decoding of those symbols.

Stoic Homeric allegoresis, by means of the identification of Homeric deities with natural elements, reveals the identity of theology and cosmology. That is to say, within a Stoic framework, that it covers all, since there is nothing beyond the cosmos and the divine, and the latter is coextensive with the former. This strongly supports the ideal of the unity of all. Philosophy must reflect this unity, and indeed Chrysippus and Posidonius insisted that although philosophy is divided into physics, ethics, and logic, it is a unity.<sup>126</sup> The ideal of cultural unity is formulated by the Stoics in their multifarious interests themselves; suffice it to think of Chrysippus, Posidonius, Apollodorus, and Crates, the above-mentioned speech of Balbus, or Cornutus. This is also the ideal that Heraclitus and Ps.-Plutarch superimposed on Homer, as we shall see now.

## 5 Heraclitus's Homeric Allegories

Heraclitus's *Homeric Allegories*, or in a more complete form *Homeric Problems Concerning What Homer Expressed Allegorically about the Gods*, may have been composed toward the end of the first or the beginning of the second century CE.<sup>127</sup> Heraclitus refers explicitly to earlier Homeric allegorists such as Apollodorus (7), Crates (27), and Crates' disciple, Herodicus of Babylon (11). Heraclitus's work, which follows the order of the Homeric poems, beginning with the first book of the *Iliad* and concluding with the end of the *Odyssey*, opens with a defence of Homeric allegoresis (1–5) and concludes with a polemic against Plato, who had criticised Homer (76–79). The principle of what is worthy of the divinity inspires the use of allegoresis for Heraclitus just as, later, for the Christian philosophical allegorist Origen.

125 Analysis of the Stoic argument in Ramelli (2004) ch. 5; text and commentary in (2007) ch. 6.

126 *SVF* 2.35, 2.38.

127 On Heraclitus see Russell and Konstan (2005); Ramelli (2004) chs. 7–8, and (2007) chs. 8–10, with texts and commentaries.

Heraclitus states at the beginning: “It is a weighty and damaging charge that heaven brings against Homer for his disrespect for the divine. If he meant nothing allegorically, he was impious through and through, and sacrilegious fables, loaded with blasphemous folly, run riot through both epics.”<sup>128</sup> Heraclitus sets out to rescue Homer from that charge by demonstrating that what Homer says about the gods is allegorical, and therefore worthy of the divinity, as the Stoic allegorists also maintained about Homer and other myths. Likewise, Dio Chrysostom, *On Homer*, Oration 53.3 claims that Homer’s myths are not impious, but “hide rational accounts about nature” that must be detected through philosophical allegoresis. Dio offers here a small treatise of exegesis of Homeric myths including Plato, Aristotle,<sup>129</sup> Zeno, Perseus, and Crates of Mallus. Heraclitus spells out the principle of philosophical allegoresis applied to Homer: “Anyone who is prepared to delve deeper into Homer’s rites and be initiated in his mystical wisdom will recognise that what is believed to be impiety is in fact charged with deep philosophy” (53). Homer expressed philosophical truths allegorically. He himself explains (5) that allegory is “the trope which says [ἀγορεύει] one thing but signifies something other [ἄλλα] than what it says.” For instance, the theomachy in *Iliad* 20 is interpreted by Heraclitus both physically, as a reference to the Stoic doctrine of cosmic conflagration (53), and as an ethical allegory, as a reference to the battle of virtues and vices (54). Physical allegoresis was firmly rooted in the Stoic tradition; for instance, Hera’s seduction of Zeus in *Iliad* 14 is an allegory of spring (39); the binding of Hera by Zeus represents the creation of the universe (40–41); and the story of Proteus in *Odyssey* 4 (64–67) is another allegorised cosmogony. Examples of ethical allegoresis also abound, such as Athena as symbolising wisdom (61–63; 75), Aphrodite foolishness (30), and Ares as a violent temperament and war (31; cf. 54). Heraclitus’s conclusion is an apology for Homer: “After all this, can Homer, the great hierophant of heaven and of the gods, who opened up for human souls the untrodden and closed paths to heaven, deserve to be condemned as impious?” (76).

Therefore, Plato was wrong to accuse Homer, all the more so in that he was inspired by him: “Away too with Plato, the flatterer, Homer’s dishonest accuser, who banishes him from his private Republic ... the irony is that both these philosophers found the basis of their doctrines in Homer, and are ungrateful as well as impious towards the person from whom they gained most of their knowledge.”<sup>130</sup> According to Heraclitus, indeed, Homer anticipated

128 Transl. Russell-Konstan.

129 Although Aristotle was no fan of allegoresis. See Bouchard (2016), esp. 47–83.

130 4; cf. 17, 76–79.



philosophical doctrines, not only those of Plato, including his theory of the soul (17), but also, for example, that of Thales, that the principle of all is water, where he describes Ocean as the source of all gods and all things.<sup>131</sup> The three heads of Cerberus symbolise the three branches of philosophy itself (33). Homer also anticipated many disciplines in his polymathy: from an epithet applied to the night Heraclitus even deduces that Homer knew the relative sizes of the sun and earth (46). Such assumptions are clearly in the line of Crates of Mallus.

## 6 Ps. Plutarch's *Life and Poetry of Homer*

Ps.-Plutarch's *Life and Poetry of Homer*, also from the early imperial age, ferreted many philosophical concepts out of Homer's text.<sup>132</sup> These works, just as the scholia to Homer, drew on the tradition of Stoic allegoresis. Ps.-Plutarch focuses on Homer from the biographical, rhetorical, literary, and linguistic viewpoint, developing the overarching thesis – going back to the Stoics, especially Crates – that his poems contain elements of every type of wisdom, philosophical, political, literary, and scientific. Sections 74–91 are devoted to Homer's "historical discourse" (λόγος ἱστορικός), with geographical, historical, and material questions; 92–160 to the "theoretical discourse" (λόγος θεωρητικός), with the physical and ethical allegoresis of Homeric passages and figures in the Stoic tradition; and 161–217 to the "political discourse" with issues concerning civic and political life. Homer provided the "principles and seeds" of philosophy: physics, ethics, and dialectics (92), philosophy of nature, politics, and ethics (208). Homeric myths must be allegorised, since in this way it is possible to detect Homer's polymathy (πολυμάθεια, 6). Indeed, theological and ethical theories developed by subsequent philosophers find inspiration (ἀφορμαί, 122) in Homer.<sup>133</sup> Homer expressed his truths through allusions (αἰνίγματα, 92).

Homer developed the physical theory of the four elements, allegorising aether as Zeus and air as Hera (94–96), according to one of the most traditional Stoic allegoreses. The author's allegorisation of the aforementioned myth of Hera-air suspended by Zeus with anvils (earth and water) hanging from her feet (97) corresponds to Cornutus 17 and Heraclitus *Alleg.* 40; the allegorisation of Ares' and Aphrodite's adultery (100–101) corresponds to Cornutus 19 and Heraclitus

<sup>131</sup> *Il.* 14.201 = 14.302; 14.246.

<sup>132</sup> See Ramelli (2004) chs. 7–8, and (2007) chs. 9–10, with texts and commentaries.

<sup>133</sup> Ἀφορμαί also occurs in 6, 93, 115, 150, and 208; this use parallels Philodemus *De bono rege secundum Homerum* 10, also in reference to Homer.

*Alleg.* 69, etc. Homer even anticipated Empedocles' theory of Friendship and Hostility as forces that impact the four elements (99–100). Homer's theomachy is also allegorised physically and ethically (102). Ps.-Plutarch (112–114), like Heraclitus *Alleg.* 2, praises Homer because he believes in the existence, eternity, and beatitude of the deities, and the intelligible nature of the supreme divinity. Ps.-Plutarch embraces many Stoic doctrines, such as Providence and Fate (115, 118), the soul as *pneuma* (127), or the cosmos as the “city of God” and common city of humans and deities (119),<sup>134</sup> and argues that they were already found, *in nuce*, in Homer. According to Ps.-Plutarch, Platonist and Pythagorean doctrines were also anticipated by Homer, such as the immortality of the soul (122), the body as a prison or tomb of the soul (124), metempsychosis (125), and Plato's tripartition of the soul (129). But Homer also anticipated Democritus's and Epicurus's atomistic and hedonistic theories (150). Homer even inspired opposite theories, such as the Stoic doctrine of the self-sufficiency of virtue for happiness (136) and the Aristotelian insufficiency of virtue for happiness (141).

## 7 *Epilogue: Stoic Homeric Allegoresis' Aftermath in Middle and Neoplatonism, Including Origen*

Stoic Homeric allegoresis was inherited by Middle and Neoplatonists,<sup>135</sup> who renounced Plato's criticism of Homer and reconciled Plato with Homer – which was facilitated by the use of allegory.<sup>136</sup> Philo and Plutarch seem to have been the first in the Platonic tradition to value Homer.<sup>137</sup> This trend continued in Neoplatonism, and the choice of which traditions to interpret allegorically – only Homer and the Greek tradition, or other traditions – was the focus of the debate between “pagan” and Christian Platonists. Numenius (with Amelius) is the only known non-Christian and non-Jew who allegorised biblical passages. This presupposed that philosophical truths were embedded in the Bible and this was authoritative. Hellenistic Jewish and Christian defenders of the presence of philosophical truths in the Bible felt the need to claim that Moses,

<sup>134</sup> On which see Ramelli (2002; 2013).

<sup>135</sup> See Ramelli (2009; 2011a).

<sup>136</sup> See Ramelli (2004) chs. 1; 7.

<sup>137</sup> See Niehoff (2012b) who, however, neglects Stoic influences on Philo in this respect (criticism of Chrysippus does not rule out Stoic influence; Chrysippus was even criticized by Stoics as well, such as Seneca). But Niehoff seems right to classify *De vita et poesi Homeri* as Stoic. So also Ramelli (2004 and 2007) for the sections on Ps.-Plutarch, and Domaradzki (2020). On Philo and Plutarch see the relevant chapters in this Companion and for the reception of Philo's allegoresis Ramelli 2008a, 2018c.

*qua* author of the Torah, was anterior to Plato and inspired him, or both were inspired by the same Logos. But “pagan” Platonists such as Celsus, Porphyry, and others, at least in anti-Christian works, denied scripture a philosophical kernel. So, Homer could be allegorised philosophically, but not the Bible.<sup>138</sup>

The same attitude to Homer as knower of truths as found in the Stoics from Zeno to Chrysippus, Cornutus, Heraclitus, and Ps.-Plutarch, also underlies Porphyry’s exegesis of Homer’s cave of the Nymphs as symbolising the cosmos.<sup>139</sup> Homer, the “theologian,”<sup>140</sup> is for Porphyry, as for the Stoic allegorists, a source of philosophical truth, and that truth is for him the same as Plato’s (for the Stoics, it was the Stoic truth). Homer’s intelligence and perfection in every virtue allowed him to “express allegorically, in the fiction of a despicable myth, images of more divine truths.”<sup>141</sup> This is why in his *Homeric Questions* Porphyry demonstrated that Homer never errs.<sup>142</sup> His attitude is the same as the Christian Platonist Origen’s toward the Bible. Origen significantly included his theory of Biblical allegoresis, not in exegetical works, but in his philosophical masterpiece (*Princ.* 4) since, like the Stoics, he deemed allegoresis a constitutive part of philosophy. He was influenced by Stoic allegorists such as Cornutus and Chaeremon.<sup>143</sup> Origen took up the Stoic and Middle-Platonic allegoresis of Homer and applied it to Scriptural exegesis, a hermeneutical move already employed by Philo.<sup>144</sup>

The chapters on Clement and Origen in this Companion illustrate well their reception of Homer. I only add that Proclus’s reports about the Homeric exegesis by an Origen, also cited in Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini* and Hierocles of Alexandria’s fragments, may concern Origen of Alexandria.<sup>145</sup> Proclus *In Tim.* 1.63–64 relates Origen’s interpretation of *Tim.* 19DE. The issue is whether Plato includes Homer among the ancient poets he is treating; Proclus bases his account on Porphyry, who knew Origen and was interested in Homeric allegoresis; he may have received this anecdote from Plotinus, Longinus, or others from that school. According to him, Origen was at pains for three days tackling

138 Analysis in Ramelli (forthcoming a), Ch. 4.

139 *Antr. nymph.* 5.

140 *Ibid.* 32.25.

141 *Ibid.* 36.10–12.

142 Johnson (2013) shows how Porphyry critically engaged with the processes of Hellenism in late antiquity. For Porphyry’s Homeric exegesis see Robert Lamberton’s chapter in this Companion.

143 Porphyry, F39 Harnack. Clement is a mine of ancient allegoresis, including Chaeremon: see Ramelli 2016b.

144 See Ramelli (2008a).

145 Ramelli (2009; 2011b; forthcoming ab). On Proclus’s reception of Homer see Anne Sheppard’s chapter in this Companion.

that question. The description of Origen's hard labour, sweating, and long mental and physical effort perfectly fits the image of Origen the Christian philosopher as an exceptionally hard worker, which earned him the title of Philoponos and Philoponotatos from Athanasius<sup>146</sup> and Eusebius,<sup>147</sup> besides the epithet Adamantios, used by his Christian followers (who likely preferred this to the "pagan" name Origen). In the same passage from Proclus, Porphyry also attests that Origen valued Homer's poetry, in that it inspired courageous deeds.

Origen the Neoplatonist's attitude to Homer corresponds to Origen the Christian's attitude. Origen mentions Homer not in his Biblical exegetical commentaries or homilies, but only in *Contra Celsum*, in which the interlocutor is a "pagan." This is consistent with the division of the acknowledged sources in Origen's Christian and philosophical works respectively, the former cited by Christian authors and the latter by Neoplatonists only. In 7.6.28–37 Origen depicts Homer as "the best of poets" and adduces what he says on demons – the topic of Origen's treatise *On Daemons* cited only by "pagans"<sup>148</sup> – in support of his own argument, also using a Pythagorean exegesis of that Homeric passage. In 4.36.32 the question is Plato's attitude to Homer and other poets, the same discussed by Origen the Neoplatonist according to Proclus. Origen the Neoplatonist's appreciation of the morally edifying contents and magnanimity in Homer's poems corresponds to that of Origen the Christian (6.7.2). The latter only adds that morally noble messages are also found in Moses, who is anterior to Homer. Both applied allegoresis (Origen not only to Scripture, but also to Plato and classical authors), at least for selected, initiated targets.<sup>149</sup> If the allegoriser of Homer and Plato cited by Proclus was the same as Origen the Christian Middle-Neoplatonist, this implies that Proclus, who disliked Christians, nevertheless regarded the exegesis of Homer and Plato by a Christian Platonist (whose Christianity he totally disregarded) worthy of study.

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<sup>146</sup> *In Illud: Qui dixerit* PG 26.649; *Decr. Nic. syn.* 27, and *ap. Socr. HE* 6.13.

<sup>147</sup> *Ecl. Proph.* 3.6. Origen's laboriousness and *ponos* are often emphasised by Eusebius, e.g. *HE* 6.2.7; 6.2.9; 6.3.7 and 13; 6.3.11; 6.8.6; 6.15.11, and elsewhere. See also Ramelli 2019.

<sup>148</sup> Discussion in Ramelli (forthcoming a), Ch. 1.

<sup>149</sup> Argument in Ramelli (2016c); for selected targets: forthcoming d). This project has benefited from a Research Professorship in Patristics (KUL) I have been awarded (essay supported by the 2019–22 "Initiative of Excellence" program # 028/R1D/2018/19).

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## An Epicurean Evaluates the Practical Wisdom of Homer: Philodemus, *On the Good King*

*Jeff Fish*

As an Epicurean philosopher, Philodemus of Gadara (c. 110–c. 30 BCE) presents a striking contrast to the view, not uncommon in antiquity, that Homer was the wellspring of all Greek knowledge and even a source of profound philosophical, cosmological, and theological truths.<sup>1</sup> This view is satirized as early as Plato's *Ion*, but it persisted in one form or another throughout antiquity. The Epicureans were among those who saw his “wisdom” as real, but limited, and, as such, made no attempts to resort to physical allegories or etymological speculation in order to save Homer.<sup>2</sup> They criticized the Stoics for “accommodating” material in Homer and other poets to their own philosophical views.<sup>3</sup> Homer was, Epicurus claimed, simply wrong about a great many things, including some of the most important truths for human beings. He was, after all, from a cultural-anthropological point of view part of the pre-Epicurean world, in which the true prerequisites for happiness had not yet been spelled out clearly, and there was therefore no reason to engage in ingenious interpretation to find distinctly Epicurean doctrines in Homer. Metrodorus, the successor of Epicurus (341–270 BCE), once told an uneducated person, “Do not be disturbed, because, as you say, you do not know on which side Hector fought, or the first lines of Homer’s poem.”<sup>4</sup> Such a state of ignorance about Homer will have meant that there were fewer falsehoods this uneducated person would need to be disabused of. Epicurus himself could not resist alluding to the Sirens in the *Odyssey* by way of telling a follower to avoid traditional liberal education (*paideia*), of which of course the study of Homer formed a central part.<sup>5</sup>

1 This is the view found in, e.g., Pseudo-Plutarch's *Life of Homer*.

2 Cf. Asmis (1991) 17 with n. 81. A prime surviving example of etymological interpretation is Cornutus, on whom see Most (1989) and Long (1992).

3 See Obbink (1995b) 201–202. Whether the Stoics “saw Homer as a strong allegorist” (on which see Long (1992) and Boys-Stones (2003b)) the Epicureans thought they distorted Homer in order to find traces of their own doctrines.

4 Plut. *Non posse* 1094e.

5 Diog. Laert. 10.6.

Even statements like these, however, are not outright rejections of poetry or its study. Epicurus is known to have said that only the sage could converse correctly about poetry.<sup>6</sup> Such engagement on the part of Epicurus himself with poetry was lacking from the record until the recent discovery that Epicurus argued the issue of the advantages and disadvantages of wealth in *On Wealth* by citing a passage of Menander on the supposed disadvantages of Poverty and refuting it.<sup>7</sup> Given the distortions of ancient anti-Epicurean polemic in sources like Plutarch, it was long thought unorthodox for an Epicurean to take opinions systematically from a poet and express approval of them, as in Philodemus' *On the Good King According to Homer*.<sup>8</sup> But the same approach is apparent: a poet makes or implies many statements about ethical values, but only the trained philosopher knows which are true or false.<sup>9</sup> While Philodemus would have agreed that Homer intended to teach many things, we know from his *On Poems* that he believed that any moral excellence Homer teaches, not to mention any practical utility to be found in him, is irrelevant to the excellence of the poem as a poem.<sup>10</sup> The most corrupting and morally base poem may, at least theoretically, be the best poem. Prose of a common register, moreover, and not poetry, Philodemus says in *On Poems*, is the appropriate medium for teaching.<sup>11</sup> None of this meant, however, that an Epicurean philosopher could not evaluate Homer's understanding of kingship and commend philosophically correct statements about kingship in his poem, but the failure to make these distinctions meant that *On the Good King according to Homer* was long seen as being outside the bounds of Epicurean orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup>

The Epicurean philosopher Diogenianus (2nd cent. CE) neatly expresses the limits of Homer's knowledge and defines his usefulness. After attacking

6 Diog. Laert. 10.120.

7 Armstrong and Ponczoch (2011) 107–114, cols. 11–14, with updated text in Blank and Armstrong (2021).

8 Philodemus probably wrote this treatise either during Piso's consulship (58 BCE) or, more probably, during his proconsulship in Macedonia (57 to mid-summer 55 BCE). In support of this provincial context of the treatise, see Fish (2018) 154–155; Fish (2016) 56–58; Braund (1996) 31–34; Fowler (1986) 82. For a summary of proposed dates, see Asmis (1991) 1 n. 1.

9 Cf. Asmis (1991).

10 This is the overarching and compelling thesis of Asmis (1991). On Epicureans and poetry see also McOskey (2020).

11 So also *On Music*, col. 134, 1–16 Delattre, where Philodemus says that though Terpander, Stesichorus and Pindar are said to have written that calmed a city's factional politics, they certainly did not do that through music, “but they convinced the citizens through words, poetically arranged, not by the musical accompaniments; and they would have succeeded still better, if their warnings had been delivered in prose.”

12 E.g., Murray (1965) 165.

Chrysippus for using Homer in a misleading way regarding the issue of fate and human causation, he concludes:

And it is quite in keeping for the poet,<sup>13</sup> who does not promise to tell us the truth about the nature of things but imitates the experiences and characters and opinions of all sorts of people, to say things that are contradictory, but it is not in keeping for a philosopher either to say contradictory things or for this very reason to use a poet as evidence.

Euseb. *Prep. Evang.* 6.8.7<sup>14</sup>

This perspective went back to Epicurus himself, as a fragment of Epicurus quoted by Demetrius Laco, a predecessor of Philodemus, seems to reveal.<sup>15</sup> Thus for Epicureans, good poets are good imitators of ordinary, unphilosophical people. That imitation could be better or worse *qua* imitation, and it would naturally convey explicit and implicit opinions about the behavior imitated. Philodemus believed that Homer contained both profoundly good and profoundly bad opinions, and like countless other writers in the moral tradition, he often cites or paraphrases Homer when he finds him illustrative.<sup>16</sup> These citations may be positive, or negative, as when in *On Death* he uses Odysseus' fear about perishing at sea as an example of an unfounded fear, since there is

13 In context, "the poet" means both a poet in general, and *the* poet, i.e., Homer in particular. For further references on Homer as "*the* poet" in antiquity see Dorandi (1978) n. 25.

14 καὶ τῷ ποιητῇ μὲν, ἅτε οὐ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡμῖν τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως ὑπισχνουμένῳ, ἀλλὰ μιμουμένῳ πάθῃ τε καὶ ἡθῇ καὶ δόξας παντοίας ἀνθρώπων, ἀρμόττον ἂν εἶη καὶ τὰ ἐναντία λέγειν πολλάκις· φιλοσόφῳ δὲ οὔτε τὰ ἐναντία λέγειν οὔτε ποιητῇ δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτο χρῆσθαι μάρτυρι.] On Diogenianus, see Erler (2009) 52.

15 Dem. Lac. *Opus incertum* (*P.Herc.* 1012) col. 70, 4–10 Puglia "Ὁμη|ρος μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν πλὴρον | περὶ τῶν τοιούτων διέ|γνωνεν ἥπερ ο[ι] | λοι[πο]ί· ἀν|θ[ρω]ποι. Ἡμεῖς δ[έ], ὦ Πυθό|κλ[ε]ις ... | τη[.] .] τοσοῦ[το]υ | δέ[ο]μεν ὥς|]τε κα[ι] ... ("For Homer for his part knew nothing more for sure than the rest of mankind about such things. But we for our part, Pythocles, ... are as far from that as even to ..."). If the sentence beginning 'Ἡμεῖς δ[έ]' is a fragment of Epicurus' letter to Pythocles, as W. Crönert (1906) 118 suggested, it would seem inescapable that the quotation must include the previous sentence. Although the context preceding this quotation is unclear, "such things" must refer to fundamental truths about the nature of things, probably in particular the rational pursuit of pleasure.

16 The most comprehensive list of Homeric citations in Philodemus is found in Dorandi (1978). On Od. 3.130a, a plus-verse a plus-verse from the *Odyssey* which Philodemus' text of Homer contained, cf. Fish (2007). Several Homeric allusions are found in Philodemus' epigrams (see s.v. "Homer" in the index of Sider (1997)). The most notable occurs in Philodemus' epigram which invites his patron and friend, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, to a dinner in celebration of Epicurus' birthday (Epigram 27 Sider). He assures Piso that that although the food will be simple, he will find "completely faithful companions and things to hear sweeter than anything in Phaeacia's land".

no perception after death and therefore the manner in which one dies does not matter.<sup>17</sup> In *On Piety* Philodemus analyzes and often ridicules the various theologies found in Homer and other poets in the mythographic tradition, as well the theological positions of some of the major philosophical schools.<sup>18</sup> Of Philodemus' known works, only *On the Good King According to Homer* (hereafter = *On the Good King*) is fully (or almost fully) dedicated to Homer and will occupy the rest of this essay.<sup>19</sup> The treatise provides the sole example of extended Homeric interpretation from the late Republic and gives us a window into how Homer was mediated to Roman statesmen by an Epicurean philosopher who, a great poet in his own right, was no less than the teacher of the youthful Virgil and other great Latin poets of his generation.<sup>20</sup>

*On the Good King According to Homer* was dedicated to Philodemus' patron and close friend Calpurnius Piso (cos. 58 BCE) and was probably written shortly before or during Piso's governorship in Macedonia.<sup>21</sup> Roman proconsuls conceived of themselves as the equals of Hellenistic kings,<sup>22</sup> and they could well relate to the idea of Homeric heroes being employed as models for their own behavior, with certain adjustments of course.<sup>23</sup> Using Homer's portrait of a good king as mediated by Philodemus, Piso could surpass the decadent Hellenistic rulers who preceded him, some of whom are mentioned in *On the Good King*, like the Macedonian king Demetrius Poliorcetes.<sup>24</sup>

*On the Good King* is both a piece of Homeric scholarship and practical advice for a ruler.<sup>25</sup> Most of the treatise, at least what survives, consists in

17 *Od.* 5.306–12, quoted at *On Death* col. 33, 10–14 Henry.

18 An edition of the second part of *On Piety*, which contains the relevant material, is being prepared by Dirk Obbink.

19 Another may be the as yet unedited and scarcely legible *P.Herc.* 1251, which is known to contain several Homeric quotations.

20 On Philodemus and Augustan poets, see Armstrong et al. (2003); Davis (2020).

21 First suggested by Paolucci (1955) 203; Cf. esp. Braund (1996) 31–34; Fish (2016) 57–58.

22 Rawson (1975).

23 While the treatise seems directed to someone with the responsibilities of a promagistrate, Murray (1965) was nevertheless correct to suggest the applicability of the treatise for Roman nobility in general. On Homer as a source for precepts on leadership, cf. Murray (1965) 175–176 and Wiseman (1985a) 10–13, who argues that competitive social dynamics in the late Roman republic were to Roman aristocrats recognizably analogous to the heroic ethos articulated by Homeric heroes.

24 Cf. Fish (2018) 154.

25 The most recent edition of this papyrus (*P.Herc.* 1507), which was recovered from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, is Dorandi (1982), which includes a translation and commentary. The final four columns of the treatise (cols. 95–98 Fish = 40–43 Dorandi) have been reedited in Fish (2016); Cols. 21–31 Dorandi in Fish (2002); col. 19 Dorandi (now = col. 74 Fish) in Fish 2011b. An English translation of the text of Dorandi (1982) is found in

observations which reveal the poet himself as having insightful and useful knowledge about kingship. On the basis of these observations Philodemus himself makes recommendations for rulers.<sup>26</sup> In making practical recommendations, the treatise is akin to works like Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft*<sup>27</sup> or presumably the *On Kingship* treatises which flourished in the 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE and are lost to us.<sup>28</sup> As an exploration of Homer, however, the treatise has a different pedigree. Like the vast majority of Philodemus' works, the title of the treatise places *On the Good King* in a category of literature which has come to be known as *peri-literature*, "the treatment of individual problems of language and content in a continuous fashion".<sup>29</sup> Unlike the rest of his many treatises in that category, it fits into what we might consider a subcategory of *peri-literature*, works which focus on the opinion of a well-known author on a given topic.<sup>30</sup> It is Philodemus' combining of this sort of literature, a monograph on some aspect of Homer, with the recommendation of practical precepts for a ruler, that is unusual.<sup>31</sup>

Analyzing an author's view of what makes a good king and making practical recommendations for ruling are two different things. How did Philodemus manage to do both? One of his standard procedures is to state the importance

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Asmis (1991) 28–34. A new text, translation, and commentary is in preparation by J. Fish. References to the text given as, e.g., col. 80 Fish refer to text in that edition under preparation, or, for the last four columns (95–98), to Fish (2016).

26 Cf. Fish (2018) 141.

27 *Mor.* 798A–825F. For an overview of some of the main themes of *On the Good King*, see Fish (2018).

28 Epicurus himself and many other philosophers contributed to this genre, which was perhaps inaugurated by Aristotle himself (so Haake (2013)). While some such treatises will have contained constitutional theory, the greater part "will have been in the form of lists of virtues that a king ought to possess, and reasons why they are important for a king" (Murray (2007) 24). On the basis of *Plut. mor.* 189D, the content of the treatises is traditionally thought to have consisted in advice for the addressee, but cf. Haake (2013). A suggested reconstruction of a "typical" *On Kingship* treatise can be found in Murray (2007) 21–26, based in part on themes in *On the Good King according to Homer* and the *Letter of Aristeas*; cf. Schofield (1999) 742–744; McConnell 2010.

29 Latacz (1997). On *peri-literature* in general, see Cameron (1995) 187–188.

30 In addition to Philodemus' *Homer on the Good King* (another way the title, Περὶ τοῦ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἀγαθοῦ βασιλέως, can be translated) we have record of other examples of this kind of literature, e.g., Oinomaos of Gadara's *Homer on Philosophy* (Περὶ τῆς καὶ Ὅμηρον φιλοσοφίας) (Suda s.v. 'Oinomaos'). Cf. de Sanctis (2006) 52. This subcategory of *peri-literature* is to be distinguished from works with titles like Ptolemaios Epithetes' Περὶ τῶν παρ' Ὀμήρῳ πληγῶν ("On Blows in Homer") which do not expressly purport to analyze an author's opinion on a matter.

31 Cf. Dio Chrysostom's *Second Discourse on Kingship* which harmonizes Homeric exegesis with moral exhortation.

of a particular virtue and then to demonstrate that Homer was aware of its importance, typically with a Homeric quotation. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. Good kings, Philodemus says, must be devoid of jealousy (ζήλο-τυπία), as well as “the being irritated by anyone’s having a share in what they themselves have.”<sup>32</sup> “Fittingly,” Philodemus goes on to observe, “the most sensible of the Greeks, Odysseus and Nestor, were so far removed from passions such as jealousy that ‘neither in war nor in counsel did they walk apart, but worked out how things would go best for the Argives’ (*Il.* 3.127–9).”<sup>33</sup> Finally, after observing that a good ruler “must be a lover of victory, but not a lover of war nor of battle” and should “avoid unnecessary troubles,” Philodemus claims that Homer “looked to these things as well, or the king of gods would not ever say that among gods Ares was the most hateful to him (*Il.* 5.890), nor would the (king) of kings ever say that among rulers Achilles was the most hateful to him (*Il.* 1.176).”<sup>34</sup> Both the king of the gods and the king of men call a contentious person or god hateful to them in a formally parallel way, and for Philodemus, this must indicate that Homer shares their opinion.

Philodemus’ introduction of kingly virtues that are essential for good leadership may be occasioned by his observation that post-Homeric kings, whom he calls “the subsequent kings” (*metagenesteroi basileis*) lacked these particular virtues. An example of this is Philodemus’ mention of the “abusive language” (αἰσχρολογία) of post-Homeric kings and “the rest of their coarse jesting (βωμολοχία).”<sup>35</sup> Philodemus claims that later kings in their courtly symposia “hurl indecent insults like comedians from a wagon, but don’t play the role of king.” Such vices are to be shunned because they result in a king’s being despised rather than “being loved with reverence, that being what is needed.”<sup>36</sup> He then proceeds to demonstrate the superiority of Homeric courtly decorum when

32 Col. 84, 23–26 Fish.

33 Col. 84, 31–40 Fish.

34 Col. 82, 32–41 Fish οἶμαι | δὲ καὶ τούτοις προσβεβλη|κέναι τὸν ποιητήν· οὐ | γὰρ ἂν ποτε ὁ μὲν τῶν θε|ῶν αὐτῷ βασιλεὺς τὸν Ἀ|ρη τῶν θεῶν ὁ δὲ τῶν βα|σιλέων τὸν Ἀχιλ|λ[λ]έα τῶν | μονάρχων [ἔχθις] τὸν ἔλ[λ]ε||[γε].

35 Col. 75, 12–16 Fish.

36 Col. 75, 19–24 Fish. While a writer like Dio Chrysostom banishes obscene entertainment from the courts of kings because of the damage they do to the soul, for an Epicurean the concern is kingly reputation. (On Homer and Dio see esp. Kim (2010) as well as his essay in this volume.) The same applies to womanizing, which Philodemus discusses in the context of showing how Paris is despised by others around him (and thus does not enjoy the safety that would come from their friendship) in contrast to his brother Hector, for whom the Trojans feel “tender love” (φιλοστοργία). The mistreatment of Hector’s body was for them tantamount to all Troy being burned down (cf. *Il.* 22.411–12 which Philodemus quotes).

it comes to indecent speech. He rather daringly suggests that the Phaeacian bard Demodocus is more reserved than Homer himself (the narrative voice) when it comes to indicating the act of sexual intercourse. Demodocus several times uses euphemisms like "sleeping" or "lying (down)" to refer to the sexual encounter of Ares and Aphrodite, while the narrative voice of Homer is "clearer" with regard to such matters.<sup>37</sup> This subsection on the lack of foul language on the part of the Homeric heroes is part of an important theme in the treatise in which Philodemus praises the court dynamics of Homer's kings in general.

In the previous examples, one sees a prescriptive element, what we might call the protreptic element, whether stated directly or by implication (e.g., good kings should not be like decadent post-Homeric kings), followed by the descriptive element of brief Homeric analysis or illustrative quotation.<sup>38</sup> Often, however, the protreptic and the analytic elements are seamlessly combined, as when Philodemus approvingly shows how Homer himself communicates principles of leadership. In his understanding, Homer wanted his readers to know what makes a good king, and he shaped his narrative accordingly. "Through Odysseus," we are told, Homer "*teaches* (διδ[άσ]κε[ι]) how one must check the threats and manifestations of disorder of the multitude through Odysseus".<sup>39</sup> Homer's didactic intentions regarding leadership could have a bearing even on major elements of the plot of the poems, as we see in Philodemus' reading of the Telemacheia, Books 1–4. Before his travels abroad, Telemachus is inexperienced in general and in particular has never enjoyed "free speech with equals" (παρρησίας ... ἰσηγόρου).<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, "for the sake of these things (i.e., the education of Telemachus) the poet contrives (?) to bring Telemachus to Pylos and Sparta where he was to have dealings with such great people, for he was certainly not going to achieve anything more concerning his father, who was by then already on Ithaca."<sup>41</sup>

37 Col. 75, 35–41 Fish. Cf. Fish (2018) 152–153. It is notable that Porphyry also makes a strong distinction between Homer and Demodocus' attitudes in the regards to the story of Ares and Aphrodite, but he sees Homer as the more discreet of the two (see. schol. H.Q.T. on *Od.* 8.267ff.). His sharp distinction between the poet and his bard is partly based on the fact that the poet at *Il.* 18.382 has a wife called Charis, not Aphrodite as in Demodocus' story. Cf. de Sanctis (2006) 57–58.

38 Cf. Gigante (1995) 69.

39 Col. 80, 36–39 Fish.

40 Col. 78, 21–2 Fish = Col. 23, 17–18 Dorandi.

41 Col. 78, 31–39 Fish καὶ το[ύ]τω[ν] χά[ρι]ν | ὁ ποι[η]τὴς ἑύποιοι[...](.)εἰς . | ἥκως ἀγαγεῖν τ[ὸ]ν Τηλέμ[α]χον εἰς | [Π]ύλον [καὶ] C[α]πάρητη[ν] | ὅπου τ[ῆ]ς λιμεν[ο]ῦ τοῖς ἑμ[ε]λ' ἔλ[ε] | συ[μ]μειβεῖται, οὐ γὰρ δὴ πλε[ι]όν | γ' ἔτι ποιήσκειν περὶ τοῦ | πατρὸς [ἐ]πι τῆς Ἰθάκης ἐν τοῖς ἡδ[ύ]τοις. Cf. Fish (1999); Fish (2018) 147. This passage on the value of travel for a prince would be relevant

Philodemus discusses the didactic intentions of Homer elsewhere in his treatise, again with approval. In *Iliad* 5, he sees Zeus' firm and clever management of court intrigue as being commended by the poet himself, in particular Zeus' handling of Athena's spiteful comments directed towards Aphrodite (*Il.* 5.418ff). The text here, with several new readings, merits quotation in full:

he (Homer) approved as characteristic of a king not just his dismissing such slanderous talk, but refusing even to hear it, understanding that those in authority, disagreeing with and conspiring against one another, manipulate as if by strings anyone who will give ear to their fictions hostile to one another, for which reason Zeus, changing Athena's attempt to create prejudice....

οὐ μόνον [τὸ πα]ραπέμ[πειν ἄλλ.] ἀ καὶ | πα[ρ]ακ[οῦ]ειν τοῦ βα[σιλέως | ἐδοκί-  
μαζεν, [ὑπολαμβά]νόμενος ὅτ[ι] δ[ι]αφωνοῦν|τες ἀλλήλοι[ς] ο[ἱ ἐ]πὶ τῶν |  
πραγμάτων κα[ὶ ἐ]πιβου|λεύοντες τὸν ὑπακούον|τα νευροσπαστοῦσι τοῖς | πλατ-  
τομένοις κατ' ἀλλήλων. | ὅθεν ὁ Ζεὺς τῇ μὲν Ἀφροδίτ[η] μετὰ γων [τ]ὴν δια-  
βο||λὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς....

ψcol. 95, 30-col. 96, 1 Fish<sup>42</sup>

The papyrus breaks off at that point, leaving us to guess what Zeus does, but the context suggests that Philodemus went on to observe how Zeus transforms Athena's harsh comments into something very different from what she had intended. Incorporating nothing of her "cutting words" (κερτομίους ἐπέεσι 419), Zeus smiles and briefly instructs Aphrodite about her proper role being love rather than war (cf. *Il.* 5.426–30). When legible text resumes at the top of the next column, we find Zeus treating another character very differently. He "reviles Ares, indicating that he hates him for sitting beside him complaining" (a close paraphrase of *Il.* 5.888–891).<sup>43</sup> No doubt for Philodemus this

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for young Roman noblemen who contemplated journeying abroad for their education, and, assuming the treatise was written sometime shortly before or during Piso's governorship in Macedonia, it may have been especially suitable to Piso's staff of young quaestors and military officers in Macedonia. Philodemus is the first we know of to articulate this view of the Telemacheia, although of course it already had a very long history (cf. Hunter (2015) 687–679).

42 For the text and full commentary see Fish (2016).

43 Col. 96, 6–9 Fish. A skeptical reader may ask how Philodemus knows that Homer "approved" of Zeus' behavior here. How can he be so sure that Homer does not approve Zeus' rejoicing when he sees the gods torn with strife at *Iliad* 21.389–90 (ἐγέλασσε δὲ οἱ φίλον ἦτορ / γηθοσύνη, ὅθ' ὀράτο θεοὺς ἔριδι ξυνιόντας). Presumably Philodemus had some way around this difficulty, as other ancient critics did (cf. the suggestions of ancient



shows Homer teaching that war-mongers like Ares should be despised, and that a good ruler, like a good philosopher, knows how to tailor his criticism to his audience.

One ingenious technique of Philodemus’ for bridging protreptic instruction and Homeric scholarship is to speculate about what Homer might say or think about something. Philodemus suggests, for instance, that Homer would advise rulers to have good spokesmen who can promote their reputations. He has no one single proof-text for this, but instead cautiously infers it on the basis of the way that Odysseus and Nestor serve as spokesmen for Agamemnon, and from the fact that both Odysseus and Telemachus cultivate bards and prophets:

But the crafty one<sup>44</sup> not only saves his own bard,<sup>45</sup> but also wins over the Phaeacians’ bard<sup>46</sup> both with (*one word missing*)<sup>47</sup> from the table and with great encomia. And it appears that he<sup>48</sup> had also made for himself a friend of the seer<sup>49</sup> in Ithaka, and for this reason<sup>50</sup> also Telemachus accepted Theoclymenus into his circle, not just because he chose to act hospitably, but also because he knew that the race of seers is believed.<sup>51</sup>

ὁ δὲ “πολύμητις” | οὐ μ[ό]νον σώζει τ[ὸ]ν [ῥ]δόν, | ἀλλὰ κα[ὶ] τὸν τῶν Φαιάκων |  
[ἐπ]άγεται καὶ . [....]ι[. .(.)] ἄ[π]ὸ τραπεζῆς κα[ὶ] μεγάλαις | ἐγκωμίαις. ἔοι-  
κεν δὲ καὶ | τὸν μάντιν ἐν Ἰθάκῃ πεφιλοποῆσθαι· διόπερ καὶ | ὁ Τηλέμαχος  
οὐχ ὅτι μόνον ἤρεϊτο φιλοξενεῖν | προσήκ[α]το τὸν Θεοκλύμενον ἀλλ[ὰ] κα[ὶ]  
πιστευόμενον | εἰδὼς τὸ γένος τῶν μάντε[ων].

col. 96, 29–41 FISH<sup>52</sup>

scholars canvased in Richardson (1993) ad loc.; Murray (1965) 175 n. 53). In any case, this delight at the divisions of one’s subordinates is something that Philodemus prohibits in *On the Good King*, but he illustrates this base pleasure not from Homer, which could have provided him a number of instances both with mortals and immortals, but rather from a character in Menander who believes that discord in a household is a thing to be prized (Menander fr. 665 Kassel-Austin).

44 An epithet used by Homer for Odysseus.

45 Phemius, Odysseus’ bard in Ithaka.

46 Demodocus.

47 Supply: ‘fine food’.

48 Odysseus.

49 Halitherses.

50 I.e., because he had seen the benefits of the seer Halitherses, who served Odysseus’ household in his absence.

51 sc. ‘by others’.

52 This text is published in Fish (2016) with full commentary.

All of this suggests to Philodemus that Homer would encourage his rulers to cultivate good spokesmen who may be trusted to advise them even as Philodemus is advising Piso.<sup>53</sup> This advice is not meant just for Homer's warriors, but also those in the audience who desire "a useful reputation" (ὀν[η]||ζ[ι]-φόρου γνώσεως), i.e., Roman statesmen like Philodemus' addressee Calpurnius Piso. While it would be easy work for many an ancient Homeric interpreter to dragoon this interpretation directly from the text, Philodemus opts merely to suggest it on the basis of hints in the Homeric text. He also suggests, though in this case not tentatively, that Homer "would have hated Demetrius Poliorcetes", a Paris-like king who met the sort of end that Hector presaged for his brother Paris at *Il.* 3.54–55, when he declared that the gifts of Aphrodite would not help him, nor his beauty, "when he rolls in the dust".<sup>54</sup> In the course of the *Iliad*, Paris meets no such end, but Hector's threat, which for Philodemus reflects Homer's opinion that good looks for a statesman are useless apart from virtue, is confirmed as truthful on the basis of the grim ending of Demetrius' own life.

By approaches like these mentioned above, Philodemus is able to maintain his Homeric moorings and yet simultaneously engage in protreptic. Sometimes, however, the strands of protreptic instruction and Homeric analysis become separated. A particularly striking instance of this occurs in a section of the treatise where the kingly qualities of gentleness, forbearance, and mercy are discussed.<sup>55</sup> Apart from his quoting the Homeric phrase πατήρ ὥς ἥπιος ἦεν ("he was gentle as a father")<sup>56</sup> which Philodemus perhaps employs in contrasting Cyrus to Cambyeses, and a possible allusion to Odysseus discussed below, he discusses these virtues almost entirely apart from reference to Homer. This suggests that he wanted to feature them (his patron had defined himself as being an advocate for mercy when Cicero was preparing to execute the Catilinarian conspirators), but he found the Homeric epics deficient in their treatment of these virtues.<sup>57</sup> Even Homer's narrative voice, in which Philodemus can sometimes find higher ideals than his heroes, must have disappointed him by commenting that Agamemnon was "giving proper advice" (αἵσιμα παρειπών *Il.* 6.62) when he told Menelaus, who was on the cusp of mercifully receiving an offer of ransom from a suppliant, that none of the Trojans should be spared, "not

53 Murray (1965) 172 suggested that this passage was an overture on Philodemus' part to Piso, much like Philodemus' epigram 27 (Sider).

54 Col. 92, 9–20 Fish. The text, including the previous quotation, is published in Fish (2018) 142–143.

55 Cols. 79–80 Fish = 24–25 Dorandi. Cf. Fish (2018) 144.

56 Found in the *Odyssey* thrice of Odysseus and once of Nestor and Hector.

57 On Piso's advocacy of mercy, see below on n. 61.

even one whom a mother carries in her womb, a son" (6.45–60).<sup>58</sup> Philodemus' most admired heroes were apparently also found unexemplary when it came to these gentler virtues, and so he preferred to abandon Homeric analysis here in favor of his own promotion of them. Although Philodemus refers to the suitors as "justly avenged" (ἐνδίκως τετιμω[[ρη]]μένοις col. 91, 33–34 Fish), this must be held in tension with a cryptic remark at the end of the extended section on mercy which may suggest that he thought the suitors could have been held to account in a way more profitable to Odysseus' own reputation in Ithaca.<sup>59</sup>

If Philodemus momentarily deviates from Homer when he recommends kingly mercy and gentleness, there are also many places in the treatise where we find him operating more in the mode of a Homeric scholar, true to his title for the work, keen to convey his analysis of Homer's kings with many subtle inferences. When, for example, Odysseus and Eumaeus are approaching Odysseus' palace, the comment of Odysseus that "inside is always the lyre" (ἐν δέ τε φόρμινξ *Od.* 17.270) is used to support Philodemus' point that the suitors were not so raucous that the lyre could not be heard.<sup>60</sup> Even the worst of Homer's kings, the suitors, were orderly enough to listen to a bard. Like Plutarch, Philodemus seems to have been open to the possibility of moral development in Homeric characters. Apart from his interest in the previously mentioned development of Telemachus, he may suggest that Odysseus "underwent correction" (ἐφ]-ρενοῦτ[ο] on account of his arrogant boasting over Polyphemus, but he shows that he learned his lesson when he restrains Eurycleia from crying out in triumph over the corpses of the slain suitors.<sup>61</sup>

58 Kirk (1990) 161 observes that such a comment is uncharacteristic of Homer, who "normally condemns violence and cruelty". Kirk's further observations somewhat mitigate the term αἵσιμα.

59 "Not by his punishment of conspiracies is the one said to have had the good will of a father seen as such" (Col. 80, 20–23). Cf. Fish (2018) 144 n. 16. This may mean that it was Odysseus' other qualities and actions that resulted in his being known for having fatherly qualities, certainly not his punishment of plots. Another possibility, which does not exclude a reference to Odysseus, is that this sentence is a criticism of Cicero's failure to show *clementia* to the Catilinarian conspirators in the year of his consulship (63 BCE). I suggest in Fish (2018) 144–145 n. 16 that this sentence could be an ironic allusion to Cicero's being awarded the title *pater patriae* for his efforts against the Catilinarians. Piso himself had advocated mercy for the conspirators (Cic. *In Pis.* 14), and his career in general was characterized by these gentler qualities (cf. Fish 2019; Griffin 2001).

60 Col. 74, 12–17 Fish. Cf. Fish (2011b).

61 Col. 91, 22–37 Fish. Cf. Fish (2018) 147–148. The text is quoted in full in the introduction of Armstrong and McOsker (2020), which also has valuable insights on anger and justice in Philodemus. The scholia on *Od.* 22.412 (οὐχ ὅσῃη καταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι) where Odysseus forbids Eurycleia's boasting are closed to the idea of Odysseus'

Philodemus' program in *On the Good King* entails a positive reading of Homer. This is clear enough from the text that survives, in which Philodemus never goes out of his way to disagree with Homer and only does so when he refers to a passage that is too good to pass up in the area of kingship but which contains some theological or metaphysical assumptions on Homer's part that must be qualified. He defends, for instance, the story of Aphrodite and Ares caught in adultery as turning one "from intemperateness, even if through unsuitable characters (οὐκ ἐπιτηδεῖ[ων] | προσῶ[π]ῶν)."<sup>62</sup> Strictly speaking, the gods should not play such roles, even if the overall point is morally edifying.

Instances where Philodemus distances himself from Homer are rare and do not detract from the overall positive attitude towards Homer's ideal of a good king.<sup>63</sup> This positive approach is also consistent with an important fragmentary phrase near the end of the treatise in which Philodemus reflects upon what his method has been in the work: "... of the points of departure, Piso, which it is possible to take from Homer for rectification ...".<sup>64</sup> One can find in Homer "points of departure" or "resources" (ἀφο[ρ]μῶν) for "rectification" (ἐπανόρθωσιν).<sup>65</sup> What kind of rectification is in view? There are two possibilities. The first sees ἐπανόρθωσις used here as a term of literary criticism.<sup>66</sup> In *How the Young Man Should Listen to Poetry*, Plutarch speaks of various "corrections" (ἐπανορθώσεις) that a reader can make of philosophically incorrect opinions in Homer. One of them involves paying close attention to surrounding words and the context: "but we must not neglect, either, the occasions for the rectification [sc. of a philosophically incorrect statement] which are afforded by the words that lie near, or by the context" (δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τὰς ἐκ τῶν παρακειμένων

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development, since he in fact he does boast (εὐχετάσθαι) over a defeated foe at *Il.* 11.450–455! Cf. Fish (2007) 79.

62 Col. 75, 6–12 Fish.

63 One more example is Philodemus' distancing of himself from the Homeric metaphysics of *Od.* 19.109, 111–114. Those lines are quoted almost in their entirety at col. 24, 33–41 Fish, and paraphrased (except for verse 112) at col. 85, 37–41 Fish. Philodemus clearly appreciates the vivid and compelling picture of the mutual flourishing of a good ruler and his subjects conveyed in the lines (cf. Fish (2011a) 90), but as an Epicurean he naturally disagrees with the simple nexus Homer makes between the physical prosperity of the land and the goodness of a ruler.

64 Col. 98, 22–25 Fish τῶν ἀφο[ρ]μῶν, ὧ Πεί[ς]ων, ἅς ἐστι παρ' Ὀμήρου λαβείν εἰς ἐπανόρθωσιν δυνάμε[ι]ν. Since Olivier's 1909 edition it has been thought that δυνάμε[ι]ν should be read after ἐπανόρθωσιν, but that is almost certainly impossible on account of the spacing. I owe δυνάμε[ι]ν to Dirk Obbink. For a detailed discussion, see Fish (2016) 69–70, 79–81, from which I draw here.

65 On ἀφορμαί see Hunter and Russell (2011) 13; Obbink (1995b) 191.

66 Cf. Asmis (1991) 21–22; Obbink (1995b) 191.

ἢ συμφραζομένων παραλιπεῖν ἀφορμὰς πρὸς τὴν ἐπανόρθωσιν).<sup>67</sup> Plutarch then proceeds to explain how various philosophical difficulties can be corrected in Homer. This is different from *On the Good King*, where Philodemus has for the most part selected philosophically correct opinions from Homer, but we could nevertheless understand the "rectification" as a kind of internal correction presented by Homer himself. Where philosophically incorrect ideas or behavior arise in the poems, Homer often provides a correction for those himself. For instance, the story of the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares may seem licentious, and some readers in antiquity thought that it fostered immorality. In fact, Homer intended for the story to turn people *away* from immorality. Homer has the correct opinion and makes that clear by means of a "rectification". Another very different interpretation of ἐπανόρθωσις is possible. It can refer to the improvement, the "setting straight", of a ruler's domain, sometimes referring to his subjects in particular. It is used in this sense just two columns earlier in a passage which speaks of how, were it not for glory, the Homeric heroes "would never have chosen to devote their own lives to *setting things right for the commons*" (πληθῶν ἐ|πανό[ρθ]ωσιν).<sup>68</sup> Parallels in Polybius show that the term can pertain to the general improvement of affairs in a ruler's domain as effected by a ruler.<sup>69</sup> This is an attractive interpretation given the probable context of *On the Good King*, Piso's proconsulship in Macedonia. We may well imagine that Philodemus, in using Homer to provide advice to Piso, very much saw Homer's bards and prophets as a kind of allegory of himself.<sup>70</sup>

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67 22B. On Plutarch's treatise, see Blank (2011); Konstan (2004).

68 Col. 96, 11–14 Fish. Alternatively, the phrase may mean "setting the masses straight".

69 7.14.6 τηλικαύτην τοῖς νέοις βασιλεύσι ῥοπήν ἔχει καὶ πρὸς ἀτυχίαν καὶ πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν τῆς ἀρχῆς ἢ τῶν παρεπομένων φίλων ἐκλογὴ καὶ κρίσις ("Such a great weight for youthful kings both for the failure and the setting right of their rule does the choice and judgment of their friends and followers have"); 27.7.12.

70 Cf. Murray (1965) 172 "[T]he Homeric μάντις, it may be conjectured, is the modern philosopher – a worthy friend, wisest of the Greeks."

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## Philo's Use of Homer

*John Dillon*

The philosopher Philo, notwithstanding his position as a scion of one of the most prominent Jewish families in Alexandria, is nonetheless – owing, no doubt, to the excellent education provided for him by his father – impressively proficient in all aspects of contemporary Hellenic *paideia*. An essential part of such *paideia* would, of course, be a thorough acquaintance with the poems of Homer, and so we should not be surprised to see Philo demonstrating such acquaintance. In his *Life of Abraham* (§10), for instance, he uses the practice of referring to Homer simply as ‘the Poet’ as an example of an expression “by pre-eminence” (κατ’ ἐξοχήν), and there are various other places in his writings where he pays unstinting tribute to Homer’s status as the first of poets. At the beginning of his treatise *On the Confusion of Tongues*, for example (*Conf.* 4), he describes Homer as “the greatest and most respected of the poets” (ὁ μέγιστος καὶ δοκιμώτατος τῶν ποιητῶν Ὅμηρος), in connection with quoting *Od.* 11.315–6 on the giant Aloeadae and their assault on Olympus – although, characteristically, he feels that the Greek story is simply a garbled version of the Tower of Babel story in the Bible.

For Philo’s project of establishing Moses as the father of philosophy, the systematic allegorization of the Homeric poems developed by the Stoic philosophers of the School of Pergamum is crucial. If the apparently unpromising details of Homer’s accounts of the wrath of Achilles and of the travels and homecoming of Odysseus can be turned into repositories of eternal truths by the application of the ‘laws’ of allegory, then, reasons Philo, so can the various narratives and prescriptions contained in the Pentateuch. But of course, it is also the case that for Philo, as a Hellenistic intellectual imbued with Greek *paideia*, a literary knowledge of Homer is a basic component of one’s education – though the demonstration of this would be somewhat inhibited by his sense of propriety as a patriotic Jew. We must, therefore, be prepared to find a substantial quotient of purely literary references to the text of Homer scattered throughout his works, with no particular allegorical aspect involved.

I propose first, then, to survey the range of Philo’s references to Homer, thematic or linguistic, in order to demonstrate his acquaintance with the poems, and then to focus on three particular instances of his appropriation of incidents or details within the poems, or more precisely, from the *Odyssey*, first

certain allusions to the travels of Odysseus in general, and in particular his struggles in the waves of mortal existence; then, the use of the description of Alcinous' Garden, in *Od.* 7. 106–32, and the Stoic allegorization of this, as a basis for his portrayal of philosophy as a garden in the *De Agricultura*; and lastly, the use of the portrayal of the suitors of Penelope dallying with her handmaidens, in the later books of the *Odyssey*, as an image of those unable to come to grips with philosophy consoling themselves with the preliminary subjects of study of the traditional Greek ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, in the treatise *On Consorting with the Preliminary Studies* (*De Congressu*).

## 1

Let us turn first, however, to a representative sample of his 'basic' literary uses of the Homeric poems. To start with some purely literary allusions, we may turn first to a passage from later in the *Confusion of Tongues* (*Conf.* 170), where he makes use of a tag from the *Iliad* (2.204–5) to drive home his point about the uniqueness of God:

λεκτέον οὖν ἐκεῖνον πρῶτον, ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἰσότημον ὑφέστηκε θεῷ, ἀλλ'  
ἔστιν εἷς ἄρχων καὶ ἡγεμὼν καὶ βασιλεύς, ᾧ πρυτανεύειν καὶ διοικεῖν μόνῳ  
θέμις τὰ σύμπαντα. τὸ γὰρ  
οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη, εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω,  
εἷς βασιλεὺς  
οὐκ ἐπὶ πόλεων καὶ ἀνθρώπων λέγοιτ' ἂν ἐν δίκῃ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ κόσμῳ καὶ θεοῦ·  
ἐνὸς γὰρ ἓνα ποιητὴν τε καὶ πατέρα πάλιν καὶ δεσπότην ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι.

Now we must first lay down that no existing thing is of equal honour to God and that there is only one sovereign and ruler and king, who alone may direct and dispose of all things. For the lines

*It is not well that many lords should rule:*

*Be there but one lord, one king.*

could be said with more justice of the world and of God than of cities and men. For being one, it must needs have one maker and father and master.

trans. COLSON

Now admittedly his immediate source here might be suspected as being Aristotle, who quotes this passage in the *Metaphysics* (12.10, 1076a4) in the course of a derisive attack on the Platonists (in particular Speusippus) for postulating multi-level universes, but that does not preclude Philo's being

acquainted with its original context. Indeed, it may serve to remind us of the complexity of Philo's sources.

Another nice instance is a passage from *On the Contemplative Life* (*Vit. Cont.* 16–7), where, in the context of praising the way of life of the Therapeutae, the ascetic Jewish sect outside Alexandria that he liked to visit, he commends Homer for celebrating the simple way of life of a certain primitive tribe:

πόσῳ δὴ κρείττους οὗτοι καὶ θαυμασιώτεροι, χρησάμενοι μὲν οὐκ ἐλάττωσι ταῖς πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν ὁρμαῖς, μεγαλόνειον δὲ ὀλιγωρίας προτιμήσαντες καὶ χαρισάμενοι τὰς οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ μὴ διαφθείραντες, ἵνα καὶ ἐτέρους καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ὠφελήσωσι, τοὺς μὲν ἐν ἀφθόνοις περιουσίαις, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ ἐν τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν· αἱ γὰρ χρημάτων καὶ κτημάτων ἐπιμέλεια τοὺς χρόνους ἀναλίσκουσι· χρόνου δὲ φεῖδεσθαι καλόν, ἐπειδὴ κατὰ τὸν ἱατρὸν Ἱπποκράτην "ὁ μὲν βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ". τοῦτό μοι δοκεῖ καὶ Ὅμηρος αἰνίξασθαι ἐν Ἰλιάδι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς τρισκαιδεκάτης ῥαψωδίας διὰ τούτων τῶν ἐπῶν·

Μυσῶν τ' ἀρχεμάχων καὶ ἀγαυῶν Ἱππημολγῶν,  
γαλακτοφάγων ἀβίῳ τε, δικαιοτάτων ἀνθρώπων,  
ὥς τῆς μὲν περὶ βίον σπουδῆς καὶ χρηματισμὸν ἀδίκIAN γεννώσης διὰ τὸ ἄνισον,  
δικαιοσύνην δὲ τῆς ἐναντίας προαιρέσεως ἕνεκα ἰσότητος, καθ' ἣν ὁ τῆς φύσεως  
πλούτος ὥρισται καὶ παρευήμερεϊ τὸν ἐν ταῖς κεναῖς δόξαις.

How much better and more admirable are they who, without having any inferior eagerness for the attainment of philosophy, have nevertheless preferred magnanimity to carelessness, and, giving presents from their possessions instead of destroying them, so as to be able to benefit others and themselves also, have made others happy by imparting to them of the abundance of their wealth, and themselves by the study of philosophy? For an undue care for money and wealth causes great waste of time, and it is proper to economize time, since, according to the saying of the celebrated physician Hippocrates, 'life is short, but art long'. And this is what Homer appears to me to imply figuratively in the *Iliad*, at the beginning of the thirteenth book, by the following lines (*ll.* 5–6):

... and the Mysian close-fighting bands, and the noble Mare-Milkers  
(Ἱππημολγοί), drinkers of milk, neglecters of livelihood (ἄβιοι), the most  
righteous of men.

As if great concern for livelihood and the acquisition of money engendered injustice by reason of the inequality which it produced, while the contrary disposition and pursuit produced justice by reason of its

equality, according to which it is that the wealth of nature is defined and is superior to that which exists only in vain opinion.

Now here most editors, both ancient and modern, take the word ἄβιοι to refer to a further primitive tribe, the Abii (Ἀβιοί), who are “the most righteous of men”, but Philo<sup>1</sup> takes it simply as a further adjective qualifying the Hippomolgi, and derives much edification from it. To him, Homer seems to be commending as supremely just the way of life that withdraws from the concerns of society, characterized as “the concern for livelihood” (ἡ περὶ βίον σπουδή), such as that practised by the Therapeutae.

On other occasions, the reference to Homer is artfully concealed as a more general allusion to the wisdom of antiquity, or some similar formulation. In *On Dreams* (*Somn.* 1.233), for example, in the course of a discussion as to how God may appear to embodied souls, not as Himself, but rather in the guise of an angel, Philo makes the following allusion to the famous Homeric remark at *Od.* 17. 485–7, to the effect that

καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοδαποῖσι,  
παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόληας,  
ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες.

the gods, in the guise of strangers from afar,  
put on all manner of shapes and visit the cities,  
beholding the violence and the righteousness of men.

Philo's take on this is as follows, commending the poet of the Greeks, while at the same time putting him in his place as a contriver of fables:

παλαιὸς μὲν οὖν ἄδεται λόγος, ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀνθρώποις εἰκαζόμενον ἄλλοτε  
ἄλλοις περινοστεῖ τὰς πόλεις ἐν κύκλῳ, τὰς τε ἀδικίας καὶ παρανομίας ἐξετά-  
ζον· καὶ τάχα μὲν οὐκ ἀληθῶς, πάντως δὲ λυσιτελῶς καὶ συμφερόντως ἄδεται.

There is then an old story much celebrated, that the Divinity, assuming the resemblance of men of different countries, goes round the different

<sup>1</sup> He can claim in support of this interpretation the authority of his contemporary, the historian Nicolaus of Damascus (p. 145 Dindorf), and even of his earlier contemporary, the geographer Strabo (*Geogr.* 7.3, 3–4), who, while initially accepting that the word denotes another tribe, then recognises that it might also be taken as an adjective, signifying ‘bereft of livelihood’. The adjective generally has a negative connotation, but Strabo, interestingly, recognises here that it may have a positive one, such as Philo bestows upon it!

cities of men, searching out the deeds of iniquity and lawlessness; and perhaps, though the fable is not true, it is a suitable and profitable one.

Similarly, the remark, at the beginning of the *Life of Joseph* (*De Ioseph*. 1–2), that Joseph, the future statesman (πολιτικός), was trained in early life as a shepherd puts Philo in mind of the fact that ‘the order of poets’ (τὸ ποιητικὸν γένος) “often speaks of kings as ‘shepherds of the people’ (ποιμένες λαῶν), is a clear reference to Homer<sup>2</sup> (though it could theoretically apply to other poets composing in epic hexameters in imitation of Homer), since the phrase, at least in the accusative or dative singular, forms the last two feet of a dactylic hexameter, and as such is frequently used by Homer as an epithet of kings (*Il.* 1.263; 2.85; 10.3; *Od.* 3.156, etc.).

Another nice instance of casual literary quotation of Homer occurs in the second Greek fragment of his essay *On Providence* (*Prov.* 2.7), in the course of a rather rhetorical exhortation to the soul not to admire wicked men:

μὴ τοσοῦτόν ποτε ψευθεῖης τῆς ἀληθείας, ὥς εὐδαίμονά τινα τῶν φαύλων εἶναι νομίσαι, καὶ πλουσιώτερος μὲν ἢ Κροίσου, Λυγκέως δ' ὄξυωπέστερος, ἀνδρειότερος δὲ τοῦ Κροτωνιάτου Μίλωνος, καλλίων δὲ Γανυμήδους,

ὃν καὶ ἀνηρεῖσαντο θεοὶ Διὶ οἶνοχοεῦειν  
κάλλεος εἵνεκα οἶο.”

*Il.* 20.234–5

Do not ever be so deceived and wander from the truth to such a degree as to think any wicked man happy, even though he may be richer than Croesus, and more sharp-sighted than Lynceus, and more powerful than Milo of Croton, and more beautiful than Ganymede, whom  
the gods caught away to themselves, to be Zeus's wine-pourer  
For the sake of his beauty ...

Here, Philo, to reinforce his point, is able to adduce three figures from Greek history or mythology, and to trot out a few lines from Book 20 of the *Iliad* to buttress his adducing of the third of them. This is the action of a man who has the poems of Homer very much in mind, if not off by heart.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The reference to Homer is made explicit in the treatise *That Every Good Man is Free* (*Prob.* 31).

<sup>3</sup> Philo's concern with the figure of Ganymede may not end here, however. An allegorization of Ganymede as Zeus's wine-pourer (οἶνοχόος), we may note, does seem to be behind certain terminology that Philo employs to describe the workings of God's Logos in the world, e.g., *Deus* 155–58; *Somn.* 2.183; 249; see Dillon (1980): 183–185.

Next we may consider a rather odd passage in the *Migration of Abraham* (*Migr.* 156–7), where Philo is reflecting on the phenomenon of ‘laughing through one’s tears’, a sort of mixed emotion that may affect the virtuous as well as the sinner:

ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ τοῖς χορευταῖς ἀρετῆς σφαδάζειν καὶ δακρύειν ἔθος, ἢ τὰς τῶν ἀφρόνων ὀδυρομένοις συμφορὰς διὰ τὸ φύσει κοινωνικὸν καὶ φιλόνητον ἢ διὰ περιχάρειαν. γίνεται δὲ αὕτη, ὅταν ἀθρόα ἀγαθὰ μηδὲ προσδοκηθέντα ποτὲ αἰφνίδιον ὀμβρήσαντα πλημμυρῇ· ἅψ’ οὐ καὶ τὸ ποιητικὸν εἰρήσθαι μοι δοκεῖ “δακρυόεν γελάσασα”. προσπεσοῦσα γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνελπίστου ἢ εὐπαθειῶν ἀρίστη χαρὰ ψυχῇ μείζονα αὐτὴν ἢ πρότερον ἦν ἐποίησεν, ὥς διὰ τὸν ὄγκον μηκέτι χωρεῖν τὸ σῶμα, θλιβόμενον δὲ καὶ πιεζόμενον ἀποσταάζειν λιβάδας, ἃς καλεῖν ἔθος δάκρυα.

But it very often happens to the followers of virtue, also, to be much moved and to weep, either because they are bewailing the calamities of the foolish, on account of their participation in their common nature, and their natural love for their race, or through excess of joy. And this excess of joy arises whenever on a sudden an abundance of all kinds of good coming together are showered down to overflowing, without having been previously expected; in reference to which kind of joy it is that the poet appears to me to have used the expression

*smiling amid her tears* (δακρυόεν γελάσασα, *Il.* 6.484).

For exceeding joy, the best of all feelings, falling on the soul when completely unexpected, makes it greater than it was before, so that the body can no longer contain it by reason of its bulk and magnitude; and so, being closely packed and pressed down, it distils drops which it is the fashion to call tears.

Here Philo is put in mind of the most affecting scene in the *Iliad* between Hector and Andromache, where Hector, on the point of going out to battle, after uttering a prayer for his son Astyanax, whom he has picked up, lays him back in his mother’s arms, and Andromache receives him, “smiling amid her tears.” Such an allusion seems to betoken a fairly intimate knowledge of the text of Homer. The employment of the phrase is nowhere else attested in extant Greek literature.

Lastly, I would adduce a reference to a famous passage from the *Iliad* in *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (4. 8), which could be taken as ‘literal’, but which arguably tends towards the allegorical. Philo is concerned with

Gen. 18:6–7, where Abraham, concerned with welcoming the three Strangers at the Oak of Mamre, hurries off to Sarah to tell her, “Hasten and mix three measures of wheat-flour and make ash-cakes.” Philo here focuses on the *three* measures of wheat-flour:

And most in accord with nature (φυσικώτατος, sc. “with allegorical truth”) is the passage concerning the three measures, for in reality all things are measured by three, having a beginning, a middle and an end; and each of these individual elements is null and void if it does not have the others, similarly constituted. Wherefore Homer declares, very soundly:

*all things are divided three ways* (*Il.* 15.189).

And the Pythagoreans assume that the triad among numbers, and the right-angled triangle among figures, are the foundation of the knowledge of all things.

What we have here is an allusion to the famous scene in the *Iliad* where Zeus is in effect ordering his brother Poseidon to desist from interfering in the battle, and Poseidon replies to him in terms which serve to dramatize the Homeric world-view: Zeus is king, but his rule is not absolute; the world is divided three ways:

τρεις γάρ τ' ἐκ Κρόνου εἰμὲν ἀδελφεοί, οὓς τέκετο Ῥέα,  
 Ζεὺς καὶ ἐγώ, τρίτατος δ' Ἀΐδης ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσω.  
 τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·  
 ἦτοι ἐγὼν ἔλαχον πολιὴν ἅλα ναιέμεν αἰεὶ  
 παλλομένων, Ἀΐδης δ' ἔλαχε ζόφον ἡερόεντα,  
 Ζεὺς δ' ἔλαχ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέληισιν.  
 γαῖα δ' ἔτι ξυνὴ πάντων καὶ μακρὸς Ὀλύμπος.

*Il.* 15.187–93

We are three brothers, born by Rhea to Cronus,  
 Zeus and I and the third is Hades, lord of the dead men.  
 All was divided among us three ways, each given his domain  
 I when the lots were shaken drew the grey sea to live in  
 Forever: Hades drew the lot of the mist and the darkness,  
 And Zeus was allotted the wide sky, in the cloud and the bright air  
 But earth and high Olympus are common to all three.

trans. LATTIMORE

Now no doubt this line had become something of a tag already by Philo's time -though he is the first extant author to quote it<sup>4</sup> – but there is no reason to doubt that he was familiar with its original context, while being fully *au fait* also with the uses to which it may have been put by Pythagoreanizing writers of the Hellenistic period.

## 2

Having now surveyed what I hope is a representative sample of Philo's purely literary uses of Homer, let us turn to consider instances of his use of him on the allegorical level. In this, Philo is no doubt much indebted to the systematic allegorization of Homer pursued in the previous century (that is, the second century BCE) by the Stoic philosophers of the School of Pergamum, such as Crates of Mallus, which is reflected later in the (first century CE) treatise of Heraclitus, *Allegories of Homer*, but his employment of it as an aid to the exegesis of the books of Moses is all his own.

There are, first of all, a number of allusions to figures in the poems, chiefly in the *Odyssey*, of whom Philo is aware of an allegorical significance. We may start with Odysseus himself, who had long since been viewed as an image of Everyman, fighting his way through the raging seas of material existence, and confronting on the way various temptations to immorality and irrationality, in the form of mythical monsters. Philo will not, of course, mention Odysseus by name, but his employment of certain key words and phrases seems to betray knowledge of this allegorization. First of all, the use in various passages of compounds of the verb νήχω (swim) (cf. *Od.* 5.399; 439), particularly ἀνάνηχομαι (e.g., *Det.* 100; *Post.* 178; *Gig.* 13) and ἐπινήχομαι (*Sacr.* 13; *Migr.* 125) seem to reflect the struggles of Odysseus (cf. *παρανήχομαι*, *Od.* 5.417), though the image of Noah in his Ark is in Philo's mind also (e.g. *Migr.* 125). Then again, the use of the term ὑποβρύχιον, "submerged" at *Virt.* 14, is reminiscent of ὑπόβρυχα at *Od.* 5.319, though there is doubtless also an influence from Plato, *Phdr.* 248A as well.

Furthermore, certain figures from Odysseus' travels are brought in as symbols of various vices. Scylla, allegorized as 'folly' (ἄφροσύνη), at *Det.* 178, is presented as a 'deathless evil' (ἄθάνατον κακόν, *Od.* 12.118); and his escape from Charybdis (*Od.* 12.219; 'the smoke and the wave') is made at *Somn.* 2.70 to symbolize our escape from the cares of mortal existence. Indeed, this latter

4 It is quoted later by such figures as Plutarch (*V. Pomp.* 53), Hippolytus (*Ref.* v 8), Nicomachus of Gerasa (ap. *Theol. Arith.* 19.12), Maximus of Tyre (*Or.* 40.6), and Proclus (*In Crat.* §148).



passage, concerning Adam's fall from grace, constitutes a particularly good example of how Philo makes use of the Stoicizing allegorization of Homer:

οὐχ ὀρέξ, ὅτι ὁ γήινος ὄγκος, Ἀδάμ, ὅταν ἄψηται τοῦ διδύμου ξύλου (Gen. 2.9), θνήσκει, δυάδα τιμήσας πρὸ μονάδος καὶ τὸ γενόμενον πρὸ τοῦ πεποιηκότος ἐκθαυμάσας; ἀλλὰ σύ γε τοῦ μὲν καπνοῦ καὶ κύματος ἐκτὸς βαίνει καὶ τὰς καταγελάστους τοῦ θνητοῦ βίου σπουδὰς ὡς τὴν φοβερὰν ἐκείνην χάρυβδιν ἀποδίδρασκε καὶ μηδὲ ἄκρω, τὸ τοῦ λόγου δὴ τοῦτο, δακτύλῳ ψαύσης.

Observe that Adam, that mass of earth, is doomed to die when he touches the twofold tree (Gen. 3: 3), thus honouring the dyad before the monad, and revering the created rather than the maker. Not so be it with you. Pass clear away "from the smoke and wave" and flee fast from the silly cares and aims of mortal life as from that dread Charybdis, and touch it not, as the saying goes, with the tip of your toe!

trans. COLSON

Another curious instance of Philo's borrowing of a Stoic allegorization concerns the comparison of philosophy to a garden, which we find in the course of his treatise *On Agriculture*, an extended meditation on Gen. 9:20: "And Noah began to be a cultivator of the soil (ἄνθρωπος γεωργός)." This leads him to consider how the soul of the Sage cultivates *its* garden, and that in turn provokes him to adduce the comparison of philosophy to a garden. At *Agr.* 14 we find the following:

τὸν γοῦν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγον τρίδυμον ὄντα τοὺς παλαιοὺς ἀγρῷ φασιν ἀπεικάζειν, τὸ μὲν φυσικὸν αὐτοῦ δένδροις καὶ φυτοῖς παραβάλλοντας, τὸ δ' ἠθικὸν καρποῖς, ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ τὰ φυτά, τὸ δ' αὖ λογικὸν φραγμῷ καὶ περιβόλῳ.

Accordingly, they tell us that the men of old likened philosophic discussion with its threefold division to a field (or 'farm', ἀγρός), comparing that part which deals with nature (sc. physics) to trees and plants; that which deals with morality (ethics), to fruits and crops, for the sake of which the plants exist; and that part which has to do with logic to a fence enclosing it.

trans. COLSON

This Stoic image is pretty well attested from other sources,<sup>5</sup> and its ultimately Homeric origin in the description of the garden of Alcinous, king of the

5 E.g., Diogenes Laertius 7. 40; Sextus Empiricus *AM* 7. 16 (both = *SVF* 2. 38).

Phaeacians (*Od.* 7.112–32) is indicated by the tell-tale term *πάγκαρπος ἀλωή* “all-producing orchard”, in Sextus’ testimony, which echoes *πολύκαρπος ἀλωή* of *Od.* 7.122. An important feature of Alcinous’ garden is that it is described as being surrounded by a fence (*ἔρκος Od.* 7.113), and this serves very well to represent the role of Logic as a preliminary to, and a defence for, the doctrines of Physics and Ethics. Now, admittedly, Philo speaks here only of ‘the men of old’, which could simply refer to the Stoic philosophers, but, on the other hand, the Stoics are not particularly old, and it sounds very much as if Philo is accepting their attribution of this division of philosophy to the wisdom of Homer, whose text, as we have seen, he knows perfectly well.

Perhaps his most sustained allegorization of Homer, however, is that which occurs in the treatise *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* (*Congr.*), involving the suitors of Penelope in the later books of the *Odyssey*, who, unable to attain union with Penelope herself, console themselves by dallying with her handmaids (cf., e.g., *Od.* 16. 108–9; 22. 417–29). The immediate occasion for the allegory is a commentary on Gen. 16: 1–6, which recounts Sarah’s noble exhortation to her husband Abraham to ‘go into’ her handmaid Hagar, in the hope of begetting a son and heir; which Abraham accordingly does, thus engendering Ishmael, but also causing Hagar to ‘get above herself’, resulting in her being driven out into the desert. For Philo, this consorting with a handmaid instead of the mistress of the house inexorably brings to mind the allegorization of the behaviour of the Suitors, a motif which had already been employed, to our knowledge, by the itinerant Cynic preacher Bion of Borysthenes,<sup>6</sup> in the early third century BCE, but it was doubtless of fairly wide currency by Philo’s time, through the agency of the Stoics of the School of Pergamum. Plutarch remarks that

ἀστειώς δὲ καὶ Βίων ἔλεγεν ὁ φιλόσοφος ὅτι ὥσπερ οἱ μνηστήρες τῇ Πηνελόπῃ πλησιάζειν μὴ δυνάμενοι ταῖς ταύτης ἐμῖνουντο θεραπαίναις, οὕτω καὶ οἱ φιλοσοφίας μὴ δυνάμενοι καταταχεῖν ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις παιδεύμασι τοῖς οὐδενὸς ἀξίοις ἑαυτοὺς κατασκελετεύουσι.

It was a clever saying of Bion, the philosopher, that, just as the suitors, not being able to approach Penelope, consorted with her maid-servants, so also do those who are not able to attain to philosophy wear themselves to a shadow over the other kinds of education which have no value.

6 Plutarch, *De liberis educandis* 10D.

Bion may have anticipated the Stoics in making this allegorization, and they can hardly have ignored him in constructing their version – though of course Philo is quite probably acquainted with the diatribes of Bion himself. In fact, the Odyssean passage suits Philo's purposes rather better than the Genesis story, since Sarah has only one handmaid, Hagar, while Philo needs a plurality, in order to represent the various 'preliminary studies' (προπαιδεύματα) – also known as ἐγκύκλια or 'general studies' – which he represents himself as consorting with before he ventured to approach philosophy:

ἐγὼ γοῦν ἥνίκα πρῶτον κέντροις φιλοσοφίας πρὸς τὸν πόθον αὐτῆς ἀνηρεθίσθην, ὡμίλησα κομιδῇ νέος ὢν μιᾷ τῶν θεραπαινίδων αὐτῆς, γραμματικῇ, καὶ ὅσα ἐγέννησα ἐκ ταύτης, τὸ γράφειν, τὸ ἀναγιγνώσκειν, τὴν ἱστορίαν τῶν παρὰ ποιηταῖς, ἀνέθηκα τῇ δεσποίνῃ. καὶ πάλιν ἐτέρα συνελθὼν, γεωμετρίᾳ, καὶ τοῦ κάλλους ἀγάμενος – εἶχε γὰρ συμμετρίαν καὶ ἀναλογίαν ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι πᾶσι – τῶν ἐγγόνων οὐδὲν ἐνοσφισάμην, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἀστὴ φέρων ἐδωρησάμην. ἐσπούδασα καὶ τρίτῃ συνελθεῖν – ἦν δὲ εὐρυθμος, εὐάρμοστος, ἐμμελής, μουσικῇ δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο – καὶ ἐγέννησα ἐξ αὐτῆς διατονικὰ χρώματα καὶ ἐναρμόνια, συνημμένα, διαζευγμένα μέλη, τῆς διὰ τεττάρων, τῆς διὰ πέντε, τῆς διὰ πασῶν συμφωνίας ἐχόμενα, καὶ πάλιν οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ἀπεκρυψάμην, ἵνα πλουσία μοι γένηται ἡ ἀστὴ γυνή, μυρίων οἰκετῶν ὑπηρετουμένη πλήθει.

For instance, when first I was incited by the goads of philosophy to desire her, I consorted in early youth with one of her handmaids, Grammar, and all that I begat by her, writing, reading and study of the writings of poets, I dedicated to her mistress. And again, I kept company with another, namely Geometry, and was charmed with her beauty, for she showed symmetry and proportion in every part. Yet I took none of her children for my private use, but I brought them as a gift to the lawful wife. Again my ardour moved me to keep company with a third; rich in rhythm, harmony and melody was she, and her name was Music, and from her I begat diatonics, chromatics, and enharmonics, conjunct and disjunct melodies, conforming with the consonance of the fourth, fifth, or octave intervals. And again, of none of these did I make a secret hoard, wishing to see the lawful wife a lady of wealth with a host of servants ministering to her.

*Congr. 74–6*

This extraordinary passage, as we can see, owes a good deal more to the motif of the suitors consorting with the handmaidens of Penelope than to the story of Abraham's consorting with Hagar, but, true to form, Philo gives no explicit indication that he is employing an allegorization of Homer – although, in his

mention of his consorting with Grammar, he lets it be known that he pursued extensive study of 'the poets'.

### 3

In the index to Cohn and Wendland's edition of Philo there are fully 40 references to Homer, and to this must be added further ones to be derived from those works of his which are only preserved in Armenian, but this survey will perhaps suffice to demonstrate the degree to which both Homeric 'tags', employed for purely literary purposes, and certain key passages adduced for their allegorical significance, are component elements of Philo's overall Hellenic *paideia*. To a large extent, his use of Homer will be found to be normal for a person of his level of education; what is distinctive, however, is his subordinating of Homeric allusions to his own Jewish sacred text, the Pentateuch, embodying the wisdom of Moses.

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# The Educational Role of Poetry: Plutarch Reading Homer

*Diotima Papadi*

## 1 Introduction: Plutarch's View on the Value of Poetry

In Plutarch's oeuvre we find influences from all aspects of culture, philosophy, and history.<sup>1</sup> The familiarity he shows with earlier literature is remarkable, and is most clearly demonstrated in his many quotations from ancient authors.<sup>2</sup> Together with Athenaeus, Plutarch is probably the author who quotes most extensively from ancient writers: philosophers, poets, historiographers, orators. But, unlike Athenaeus (who mostly quotes long passages to show his erudition), Plutarch does not quote merely to parade learning.<sup>3</sup> For Plutarch quoting is a way of interpreting literature. Plutarch actively engaged in a kind of literary dialogue with the whole of Greek literature, starting from Homer.<sup>4</sup> In all antiquity Homer appears as the model-poet against whom all others are measured. He is commonly referred to as 'The Poet', the poet *par excellence*.

The role of poetry and its ethical value in antiquity is an issue explored as early as the Presocratics; Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Heraclitus all questioned to a certain degree the authority of Homer and Hesiod as educational poets;<sup>5</sup> later, Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates engaged with the issue more fully.<sup>6</sup> 'Literature must serve a purpose outside itself: it must be useful, if not by increasing one's command of language and knowledge of the world, then by improving the ethical makeup of its audience and readership'<sup>7</sup> – this was a fundamental as much as a widespread conviction in archaic and classical Greece.

1 Cf. de Romilly (1988) 219.

2 See, among others, Helmbold and O'Neil (1959); Tagliacacchi (1961) 71–72; Fuhrmann (1964) 41; Di Gregorio (1979) and (1980); Desideri (1992); Van der Stockt (1992).

3 About the reception of poets and historians by Athenaeus, see Braund and Wilkins (2000).

4 Cf. Van der Stockt (2000b), esp. pp. 104 and 109.

5 On this point, and generally on the ancient reception of Homer, see Graziosi (2008); also, Manolea (2004) 21–42.

6 Plutarch's pragmatic approach to education owes much in spirit to Isocrates – see Marrou (1956), Too (1998), and Too and Livingstone (1998). For Plato and Aristotle's critique on Homer see, e.g., Manolea (2004) 28–34.

7 Sicking (1998) 101.

The educational role of poetry becomes problematic equally early, however, for a variety of reasons: partly it is the disparity between the social role of poetry and its content, especially the way the gods are depicted, for example, by Homer (so, e.g., Xenophanes); partly it is the rise of competing claims to educational authority, beginning again in the archaic period but especially visible in the sophists,<sup>8</sup> in Socrates, and in Plato.

Plutarch is heir to this tradition. Yet his standpoint for establishing his poetic criteria and developing his view on poetry is very different from Plato's. Plutarch sees things in a more pragmatic and sophisticated way; therefore he examines how and to what extent poetry can become useful for or an indispensable part of the literary and philosophical *paideia*. Contrary to Plato, Plutarch does not reject poetry outright, even if he does share to some degree Plato's concern about the untruthfulness of poetry, as he admits at 17D–E of the essay *How a young man should listen to poetry* ('The art of poetry is not greatly concerned with truth, and the truth about these matters, even for those who have made it their sole business to know and understand the reality, is exceedingly hard to track down and hard to get hold of').<sup>9</sup> Unlike Plato, he prefers to include poetry in the state, provided that its citizens develop first their judgement (*κρίσις*), or, better, "faculty of discernment"<sup>10</sup> to an adequate level, so that they will be finally in the position both to benefit from its positive effects and to resist strongly its possible harmful effects. Plutarch's thesis is that poetry *is* beneficial unless misused. He does not see poetry as a threat to the state's stability, or as a cause of the citizens' corruption; on the contrary, he recognises its central role for the state, where the citizens will see poetry both as a useful tool to sharpen their mind and as a good exercise, that can direct them towards philosophy and a better understanding of the paramount philosophical truths and values for life. Anyway, the intellectual environment of the first centuries CE would not allow Plutarch to adopt the Platonic agenda concerning poetry.<sup>11</sup> Plutarch's times are not times to obliterate the past, but to revive it.

In Plutarch's times, and indeed in all antiquity, Homer is certainly part of an important tradition as well as of the literary background which Plutarch shares with his *pepaideumenoi* readers.<sup>12</sup> Greek literature and philosophy are

8 See, e.g., Protagoras' critique of Simonides' poem in Plato's *Protag.* 340a ff.

9 Cf. here, for example, Said (2005), who compares Plutarch's view on poetry with that of Plato (esp. pp. 150–158).

10 The translation of the term *κρίσις* which is preferred here is suggested by Whitmarsh (2001, 50) – cf. also Too's discussion (1998) of the term, esp. pp. 9–10 and 131.

11 As Russell affirms (1973, 51), Plutarch "cannot of course acquiesce in Plato's exclusion of poetry from an educational system of which it was a fundamental part".

12 Cf. Bréchet (2007a) 336.

the quintessence of his *paideia*, not only a means of displaying his erudition. Plutarch's use of classical texts is not only an indication of his admiration for the past but also a sign of the popularity of poetry, philosophy, and drama in his times. Every *pepaideumenos* of those times had a good knowledge of Greek epic and drama. Homer was the poet *par excellence* used for the education of Greek young men since archaic times, and, together with Greek Tragedy, his poetry was among the most popular pieces of literature used for the education of both Greeks and Romans in Hellenistic times. The heroes of Greek epic and drama had always been used as exemplars for learned men. The Homeric tradition and the rhetoric of Homeric lines appears to be a matter of an open literary debate not just in Plutarch, but also in other authors of the so-called 'Second Sophistic' too (e.g., Athenaeus, Aelius Aristides, Lucian, Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus, and Philostratus).<sup>13</sup>

## 2 Plutarch's Individual Works on Homer

Not only did Plutarch study Homer in depth, but he also dedicated entire works to him, either in reference to the poet's life (*Ὁμήρου βίος*, *Vita Homeri*); or as a commentary on his work (*Ὀμηρικαὶ μελέται*, *Homericæ exercitationes*), of which only six fragments survive;<sup>14</sup> or as a specific topic for discussion among a variety of other topics raised in the *Table Talk* (Questions II 5; V 4, 8, and 10; VI 9; IX 4 and 13). There is also the treatise by Pseudo-Plutarch *Περὶ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς ποιήσεως Ὁμήρου*, *On the Life and Poetry of Homer* (*De vita et poesi Homeri*) which is often referred to as *Περὶ Ὁμήρου* (*De Homero*),<sup>15</sup> and a lost work by Plutarch entitled *Περὶ τοῦ χρόνου τῆς Ἰλιάδος* (*De Iliadis tempore*).<sup>16</sup>

## 3 Homeric References – Plutarch's Programmatic Use of Homeric Poetry

Apart from Plutarch's individual essays or questions focusing on Homer, it comes rather as no surprise that Homer is the most quoted poet in Plutarch's

13 Cf. Bowie (1970), (1991), and (1997); Kindstrand (1973); Berry (1983); Pernot (2007); Moreschini (2007); Bréchet (2007a); Schmitz (2014). Lamberton (2011, 45–46) discusses, among others, the sources which the "Second Sophistic" authors used (anthologies, other intermediate sources, etc).

14 *Cat. Lampr.* n. 42 [*Ὀμηρικῶν μελετῶν βιβλία δ'*]; frags. 122–127 Sandbach. Cf. D'Ippolito (2004) 12, and (2007) 60–61; Bréchet (2005b) 178.

15 About this essay see Keaney and Lamberton (1996), and Fernández Zambudio (2009).

16 *Cat. Lampr.* n. 123. Cf. D'Ippolito (2004) 12–13, and Bréchet (2005b) 176.



work, with Euripides ranking second. Homer is indeed omni-present: there are more than 550 quotations from the *Iliad* and more than 300 from the *Odyssey*.<sup>17</sup> To these more explicit references there should be added some rather implicit Homeric references or allusions in the *Lives*, as it is often the case that Plutarch presents the characters of his biographies as sharing common traits, whether good or bad ones, with characters in epic or tragic poetry (cf., e.g., *Pomp.* 29.5–6 and 72.2; *Pyrroh.* 13.2; *Cam.* 13.1–2; *Sol.* 30.1; *Thes.* 2.1; *Aem.* 1.2).<sup>18</sup> As perhaps expected, the essays with the most numerous Homeric citations are *How a young man should read poetry* (*De audiendis poetis*)<sup>19</sup> and *Table Talk* (*Quaestiones Convivales*),<sup>20</sup> where, among others, the sympotic spirit encourages a comparative study of poetic sayings on a wide range of topics, often within a competitive spirit among the various interlocutors. However, it is striking that epic poetry, and especially Homer, is referred to in more than hundred cases, in contrast to lyric poetry, of which Plutarch makes only restricted use, even though the appropriateness of lyric poetry for a sympotic context would make it, one would expect, the obvious choice of source for citations at a table talk.

Plutarch's pedagogical perspective, together with his interest in the ethics as an intrinsic part of poetry, make it all the more intriguing and challenging to investigate how Homeric quotations or resonances work within Plutarch's web of multiple citations and poetic criticism. Plutarch clearly assumes that his audience can recognise detailed allusions not only to particular scenes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but also to their entire structure. At the same time Homer appears to be for Plutarch the ultimate poetic authority which can provide him with valuable views on historical, scientific, psychological, political, and no less ethical aspects.<sup>21</sup> One could say that the straightforwardness and

17 See Helmbold and O'Neil (1959) 39–48; Zadorojnyi (2011) uses their evidence to draw his own conclusions about the character of the Homeric quotations in Plutarch. Cf. also Morgan (1998) 318–319.

18 Cf. de Wet (1988) 16–19.

19 Apparently there is an extensive bibliography on Homeric citations in Plutarch's work (and beyond), in general, and in this specific essay, in particular – I have profited immensely, among others, from the discussions by Bréchet (2000), (2003), (2005b), (2007b), Bona (1991), Cannatà Fera (1996), Díaz Lavado (1994) and (2010), D'Ippolito (2004) and (2007), Gómez Cardó (1999), Lamberton (2011), Pordomingo (2000), Said (2005), Sluiter (2005), and Zadorojnyi (2011).

20 See previous note, and the discussions by Teodorsson (1989–1996) and Molina Marín (2009) on the *Table Talk*.

21 Sluiter (2005), 392 notices that in the work entitled *On the Life and Poetry of Homer*, which is often ascribed to Plutarch, Homer is presented as the ultimate encyclopedic source of all knowledge: "Homer's work contained the 'first seeds', the σπέρματα, of all knowledge" – and no less of rhetoric. Cf. also Lamberton (2011) 46, and de Wet (1988) 15–16.

effectiveness of Plutarch's own points on various issues is often achieved by approving of or sharing the points that the wise Poet makes – the opportunistic use of quotations and poets as to suit his purpose or context is a point to keep in mind concerning the way he both manipulates and presents his material. Yet the interaction between Plutarch and Homer is not restricted to that extra tone of authority and the strong point of reference which Homer can lend Plutarch, but it also extends to aesthetic purposes, as Homeric lines are often used as an embellishment, for diversity purposes.<sup>22</sup> Plutarch makes a clear distinction between what is aesthetically good and what is actually good. When reading poetry, readers must always keep in mind that the form (poetic representation) is distinct from the content (poetic meaning) (cf., e.g., 18A–F, 28A). Poetry becomes for Plutarch part of his methodology, of his rhetoric, and finally of the ethical-educational dimension of his writings.

#### 4 'How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry' – Understanding Poetry through Homer

##### 4.1 *Poetic Truth vs Reality*

In *How a young man should listen to poetry*, the focus point of the present paper, Plutarch places the emphasis on the educational role of poetry for the young man, and dissociates poetry from ἀλήθεια in its double sense: "truth" and "reality".<sup>23</sup> It is so that the young in the early stage of their education cannot often distinguish poetic truth from poetic pleasure, since the aesthetic and ethical value of art are in constant interaction, so that they may occasionally overlap.<sup>24</sup> So, the essay has a strong educational and practical rather than theoretical aspect, and Plutarch is more analytical in the way he comments about poetry, since he quotes from poetic works to exemplify the various approaches

22 Cf. Díaz Lavado (1994) who discusses the character of Plutarch's Homeric quotations with special emphasis on the various ways of their introduction; cf. Cannatà Fera (1996) 419. See also Bowie (2014) esp. p. 178.

23 Cf. Schenkeveld (1982) 67 n. 15. Sicking (1998, 99) points out that "this ambiguity of the Greek term 'ἀληθές' is often important in Plato", too.

24 The pragmatic and practical side of the essay is strengthened by its structure: it is presented as a letter to Marcus Sedatius, whom Plutarch encourages to pass it on to his young son, Cleander, to read (14D–15B). But of course the perspective is wider than that which the private purposes imply; it is an essay for every educator, for every father and his sons. One should note here that Plutarch raises interesting points on the educational role of poetry even in other essays, such as *On Listening to Lectures* (*De recta ratione audiendi*), *On Progress in Virtue* (*De profectibus in virtute*), and *Were the Athenians More Glorious in War or in Wisdom?* (*De gloria Atheniensium*) – cf. Said (2005).

to poetry – or, in several cases, confronts poetic statements with each other. Poetic lines can be very context-specific and therefore they may be dangerous for the readers, if they think that they reflect general truths. Even if Plutarch is not always in agreement with the poets, poetic references offer him a good starting-point for developing a system of criticism based on moral and educational value.

For Plutarch there are several things that may be disturbing or dangerous in poetry. One of those dangers emerges if the reader takes poetic lines at face value and thinks that they echo the poet's personal view, since the effect is to give the poet's moral authority to morally questionable views. Even more dangerous would it be if poets were obeyed as if they were law-givers, Plutarch says emphatically (28B). The metaphor is clearly pointing out that the task of law-givers and poets is not the same; nor is the value of the work they produce in any way similar: the law-givers enact and enforce laws that must be respected by everyone, whereas poets produce works of which everyone must be critical, so that the poetic ways of defining both good and bad are not meant to be internalised in a direct unquestioning way. So, young people in particular who study poetry intensively should not be carried away by the authority of the wise poet and believe whatever he says. They should always examine the truth of poetic sayings and try to understand all their possible implications. Plutarch takes on the task of suggesting how his readers should understand various poetic dicta, to what extent and why they should approve or disapprove of poetic sayings. This task is not limited within literary boundaries but expands into the domain of morality and philosophy. Plutarch may not be developing a systematic educational theory, but he is determined to offer his (young) readers some edifying guidelines as to how they should respond to and understand poetry, and most importantly, as to how to use poetry in their lives. Ideally, poetry should appeal both to 'pleasure' and 'utility'.<sup>25</sup> Unless the young men develop a skill of appreciating poetry and interpreting it correctly (less) in aesthetic and (more in) moral terms, they will not be able to discern between what has merely literary value and what could also have a pragmatic value for real life.

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25 Cf. Russell (1981) 86: a combination of *ars* and *ingenium* could be regarded as the wise poet's aim; cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 341: "he who combines the useful with the pleasant wins every vote".

#### 4.2 *The Educational Role of Poetry – Indications of Homeric Examples to Imitate and to Avoid*

One of the focus points in the essay *How a young man ...* is how young people should be educated.<sup>26</sup> Both their parents and their school play a major role in their education. Children who receive good education will manage to extract useful messages even from passages that may be base and improper with reference either to morality or aesthetics (cf. 32E–F). Not only will they then be able to distinguish between “good” and “bad” poetry – and show their preference for the former – but they will also explore ways to be taught by the poetry which depicts characters that are unworthy of imitation. The example of improper behaviour that Plutarch quotes here, at 32F,<sup>27</sup> is taken from the *Iliad*, and refers to Agamemnon, who discharged a rich man, Echepolus, from his duty to serve the Achaean army, because he had bribed him by offering him a good horse: δῶρ', ἵνα μή οἱ ἔποιθ' ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἡνεμόεσσαν/ ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ τέρπειτο μένων• μέγα γάρ οἱ ἔδωκεν Ζεὺς ἄφενος, *Il.* 23.297–9 (“as a gift, so that he might not follow him to windy Ilios but might remain at home and take his joy; for great wealth had Zeus given him”, 32F). Yet Agamemnon was right to take a good horse rather than a bad man, as Aristotle remarked (32F).<sup>28</sup>

Plutarch explains that the young men must understand poetry as an imitation of character and lives (26A: μίμησιν εἶναι τὴν ποιήσιν ἡθῶν καὶ βίων);<sup>29</sup> therefore they must be so trained as to admire poetic characters who utter noble words and perform noble deeds, whereas they must resent characters who utter mean or disrespectful words (26A–B). This seems to be the conclusion that Plutarch draws after quoting extensively from Homer, this time both from the *Iliad* and from the *Odyssey*, even if the latter is, on the whole, far less used than the former by Plutarch in this essay.<sup>30</sup> The cluster of quotations opens with *Il.* 16.97–100, where Achilles, full of hatred for the Trojans, and anger for the Argives, prays to Zeus, that none of the Trojans or the Argives escapes death, apart from himself and Patroclus: αἶ γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον,/ μήτε τις οὖν Τρώων θάνατον φύγοι, ὅσσοι ἔασι,/ μήτε τις Ἀργείων, νῶν δ' ἐκδύμεν ὀλεθρον,/ ὅφρ' οἱ Τροίης ἱερὰ κρήδεμνα λύοιμεν (“for I wish, father Zeus,

26 Perhaps Plutarch's essay serves also as a reply to a lost work of Chrysippus with the same title (*How a young man should listen to poetry*), known from Diog. Laert. 7.200.

27 The same example is mentioned by Plutarch elsewhere, too: see 209C, 498B, 767A, 988A.

28 Cf. Bowie (2014) 184.

29 In the present paper, all translations of Plutarchan texts follow the Loeb edition of the *Moralia*; yet in the case of Homeric texts, the translation is taken from the Loeb (revised) edition of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

30 In Plutarch's works in general there are more than twice as many quotations taken from the *Iliad* as from the *Odyssey*. See Helmbold and O'Neil (1959) 39–48.

and Athena, and Apollo, that no man of the Trojans might escape death, of all there are, nor any of the Argives, but that we two might escape destruction, so that alone we might lose the sacred diadem of Troy", 25E–F). Plutarch clearly censures these words, and points out the bad effect that these words may have, should they be accepted and approved as such: ἐπεὶ βλάβησεται μεγάλα δοκιμάζων πάντα καὶ τεθηπώς, μὴ δυσχεραίνων δὲ μηδὲν μηδ' ἀκούων μηδ' ἀποδεχόμενος τοῦ ψέγοντος αὖ τοὺς τοιαῦτα πράττοντας καὶ λέγοντας ("For he will be greatly injured if he approves everything, and is in a state of wonderment over it, but resents nothing, refusing even to listen or accept the opinion of him who, on the contrary, censures persons that do and say such things as these", 25E). Great heroes make sometimes great mistakes – Achilles' uncontrolled wrath makes him here go as far as to wish the death for his comrades.

Then Plutarch quotes Agamemnon's words to Odysseus in the Underworld describing the most terrible deed, namely Clytemnestra's slaying of both her husband and of Cassandra: οἰκτροτάτην δ' ἤκουσα ὅπα Πριάμοιο θυγατρὸς/Κασσάνδρης, τὴν κτείνει Κλυταιμνήστρη δολόμητις/ἀμφ' ἐμοί, *Odys.* 11.421–3 ("But the most piteous cry that I heard was that of the daughter of Priam, Cassandra, whom guileful Clytemnestra slew as she clung to me", 25F). The reader should resent such deeds, and not be affected by characters who perform reproachable actions (cf. also the quotations immediately after, the first one from *Il.* 9.452–3, and the second one from *Il.* 3.365, again quoted in the *Table Talk*, 743B, where Menelaus goes as far as describing the father of gods, Zeus, as a baneful god).<sup>31</sup> Homer presents all types of characters and behaviour, good and bad, simple and complex. The multiple voices in his poetry make it all the more challenging for the reader to discover, if at all, a kind of exemplary truth.<sup>32</sup> Yet, propriety concerning the faithful representation and propriety in moral terms are two different things, and so the reader is meant to transcend the propriety of the lines as such to think about propriety in terms of the character who speaks these lines. Readers should be just as ready to call poetic views "wrong" and "improper" as "right" and "proper" (26B),<sup>33</sup> while they must also learn to dissociate the authorial voice from the poetic character (cf. 18D–E).

At 26C–E there follows another cluster of Homeric quotations from *Il.* 1.59–60, 1.90, 1.220–1, on which Plutarch explicitly offers his own view, so as to make clear to the readers how the quoted lines must be received. His phrasing is indicative of whether he approves or disapproves of Achilles' words or

31 Cf. Sluiter (2005) 393.

32 Cf. Russell (1981) 90–91.

33 The idea that the readers must know exactly what "good" and what "bad" is, in order to be able to avoid the latter is of course Platonic, again. – cf. Bréchet (2005b) 186.

deeds – for all the above quotations refer to Achilles: ὀρθῶς ταῦτα καὶ μετρίως καὶ περπόντως (“rightly, moderately, and properly is this put”, 26D), ἐνδεικνύμενος ὀλιγωρίαν καὶ περιφρόνησιν τοῦ ἄρχοντος (“thus making plain his slight regard and his contempt for the leader”, 26D), εἴτ’ αὖθις μετανόησας ... ὀρθῶς πάλιν καὶ καλῶς (“again, later, repenting ... this time rightly and honourably”, 26D–E). Interestingly enough, Plutarch often alternates between judging poetic characters and judging the poets themselves; in the examples quoted above, at 26D, he applies his criticism to the character himself, whereas elsewhere he will pass his criticism directly to the poet (authorial voice) himself (cf., e.g., 34E: ἀριστα δ’ εἰρηκότος Ὀμήρου, or 30B: εἴρηται χρησίμως).

At 35A ff. Plutarch employs a long cluster of quotations to explain how Homer guides his readers by carefully choosing the words to describe human traits or attitudes – his examples at 35B–C are taken from *Il.* 2.173, 7.47, 19.216, 11.608 (examples of commendation); and from *Il.* 1.225 (again quoted earlier, at 19C),<sup>34</sup> 23.483, 23.474, 478–9, 13.824 (examples of censure).

As Plutarch remarks both in this essay and elsewhere, poets create different figures, whether good or villains, who speak lines according to their character (18E–F). Therefore, the reader must realise that bad characters do bad deeds or behave in improper ways. Plutarch underlines the fact that some poetic lines may convey disturbing moral messages and have a bad influence on the readers if the latter do not realise the poet’s objectives; yet the same lines are to be regarded as right and appropriate if they correspond to the character who utters them. Plutarch places the emphasis on appropriateness to character rather than appropriateness in less specific aesthetic terms. There follows a cluster of Homeric quotations that illustrate exactly this point made by Plutarch (28F–29A). In the first pair of quotations, Plutarch compares some appropriate words uttered by Achilles to Agamemnon, despite his anger: οὐ γάρ<sup>35</sup> σοί ποτε ἴσον ἔχω γέρας, ὅππότ’ Ἀχαιοὶ/ Τρώων ἐκπέρσωσ’ εὐ ναιόμενον πτολίεθρον, *Il.* 1.163–164 (“Never do I have a prize like yours, when the Achaeans sack a well-peopled city of the Trojans”, 28F) to the lines uttered by a villain, Thersites, again addressed to Agamemnon, this time in a provocative way: πλεῖαί τοι χαλκοῦ κλισίαι, πολλὰ δὲ γυναικες/ εἰσιν ἐνὶ κλισίῃς ἐξαίρετοι, ἅς τοι Ἀχαιοὶ/ πρωτίστῳ δίδομεν, εὖτ’ ἂν πτολίεθρον ἔλωμεν, *Il.* 2.226–8 (“Your huts are filled with bronze, and there are many women in your huts, chosen spoils that we Achaeans give you first of all, whenever we take a city”, 28F–29A).<sup>36</sup> More Homeric lines

34 The verse was a famous one – cf. Hunter and Russell (2011) 107, n. on 19C.

35 The Homeric text reads: οὐ μὲν (instead of οὐ γάρ) etc.

36 See the interesting comment by Hunter and Russell (2011, 161): “Plutarch’s point is that, whereas it was right for (even an angry) Achilles to say what he said, it was not appropriate for a Thersites to say similar things, because of his badness of character”.

follow, again to contrast Achilles (αἶ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς/ δῶσι πόλιν Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἐξαλαπάξει, *Il.* 1.128–9) (“if ever Zeus grants us to sack the well-walled city of Troy”, 29A) with Thersites (ὄν κεν ἐγὼ δῆσας ἀγάγω ἢ ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν, *Il.* 2.231) (“whom I perhaps have bound and led away or some other of the Achaeans”, 29A), whose absurd pride turns him into a “mock Achilles”, a parody of “the best of the Achaeans”.<sup>37</sup> Achilles’ lines are again quoted at 541C of the essay *On Praising Oneself Inoffensively* as an example of his μετριότης.<sup>38</sup> The young man, says Plutarch, should be taught by the above examples to recognise moderation and modesty shown by noble characters (such as Achilles), as opposed to boasting and self-assertion shown by mean characters (such as Thersites) (cf. 29B). It is interesting to see how later, at 35D, Plutarch will extend Achilles’ moderation (μετριότης) into a virtue which the young men will also acquire from perusing poetry. It is via poetry that the young men can achieve moderation (μετριότητα) and magnanimity (μεγαλοφροσύνην), which are two important virtues with practical value for life.

Plutarch advises his readers to draw a distinction between what fictitious characters say and what poets say accordingly, and to pay particular attention to any hints or reactions from the poets’ side concerning their agreement or disagreement with how their characters speak or act (cf. 19A: “Close attention must be given to see whether the poet himself gives any hints against the sentiments expressed to indicate that they are disliked by him”). One of the reasons Plutarch admires Homer is exactly this, that he is a poet who explicitly approves or disapproves of what different characters say, leaving the reader with no doubts as to how poetic lines are to be understood. Thus at 19A ff. Plutarch gives several examples, where the poet himself gives clear guidelines to his readers as to how the poetic lines are to be interpreted. The way Homer introduces the lines and the wording he uses, e.g., in *Odys.* 6.148: αὐτίκα μελίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον (“so at once he made a speech both winning and crafty”, 19B), and in *Il.* 2.189: τὸν δ’ ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν ἐρητύσασκε παραστάς (“to his side he would come and with gentle words seek to restrain him”, 19B), show that he approves of the way Odysseus speaks or behaves in these lines. Similarly, he warns his readers in advance, and proclaims that they are not to follow unjustifiable or mean words uttered by characters, especially when these characters seem to be acting under the influence of strong passions, such as anger – see, for example, *Il.* 1.223–4: Πηλεΐδης δ’ ἐξαὐτίς ἀταρτηροῖς ἐπέεσσιν/ Ἀτρεΐδην προσέειπε, καὶ οὐ πω λῆγε χόλοιο (“But the son of Peleus again addressed the son of Atreus with violent words and did not yet cease from his wrath”); or, *Il.* 1.24–5: ἀλλ’ οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ἥνδανε θυμῷ, / ἀλλὰ κακῶς

37 *Ib.*

38 Cf. the comment by Hunter and Russell (2011) on 29A, *ib.*

ἀφίει (“yet this did not please the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, but he sent him away harshly”) (19B).<sup>39</sup> In this latter example it is interesting to see how Plutarch, in his own explanation of the verses quoted, adds to the adverb *κακῶς*, that Homer uses, a strong moralizing tone: *τουτέστιν ἀγρίως καὶ αὐθάδως καὶ παρὰ τὸ προσήκον* (“that is to say, savagely and willfully and contrary to what he should have done”, 19C), in order to emphasise his own purposes.

Moreover, Homer finds it useful at certain cases, Plutarch notices, to draw conclusions or a sort of verdict of his own, in order to guide his readers as to how they should receive the words or deeds of poetic characters; cf. 19D, where the reference is to *Odys.* 8.329: *οὐκ ἀρετᾷ κακὰ ἔργα • κίχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν* (“Ill deeds do not win out. The slow catches the swift”), to *Il.* 8.198: *ὥς ἔφατ’ εὐχόμενος*, *νεμέσθησε δὲ πότνια Ἥρη* (“So he spoke boastfully, and queenly Hera was indignant”), and *Il.* 4.104: *ὥς φάτ’ Ἀθηναίη, τῷ δὲ φρένας ἄφροني πείθην* (“So spoke Athena, and she persuaded his heart in his folly”). The poetic comments underlined above function as an explicit guideline of gnomic value to the readers. Homer, exactly as Plutarch too, wants to protect his readers against any bad influence that they might receive from mean characters, from their cruel words or unworthy deeds, and to encourage them to admire noble words or deeds.

When Plutarch detects a disturbing or erroneous statement, he first tries to find another statement (as a counterbalance) within the works of the same poet, and encourages the young readers to do the same. An example of this correcting pattern can be found at 20E–F, where Plutarch urges the young men to set against all those descriptions of gods by Homer, where they are presented as being ill-tempered, or disputing, or even being wounded by mortals, lines where the poet speaks of the gods in a more apposite way. This kind of methodological approach, which Plutarch suggests, is summarised by the Homeric line he employs here – a kind of stock line: *Il.* 7.358, 12.232: *οἴσθα καὶ ἄλλον μῦθον ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοῆσαι* (“you know how to devise better words than these”, 20E) – Plutarch advises his readers to seek for better poetic statements, in this case regarding the gods. One cannot avoid noticing how smoothly the Homeric quotation is incorporated in Plutarch’s argument itself. There follows a cluster of tragic quotations (taken mainly from Euripides and Sophocles), as well as of Homeric quotations where gods are presented in an appropriate way: *Il.* 6.138 (= *Odys.* 4.805, 5.122); *Odys.* 6.46; *Il.* 24.525 (cf. 22B). It is certainly not accidental that many quotations taken from Homer refer to gods, especially to

39 The first book of the *Iliad* was perhaps the most popular and discussed of all Homeric books – thus Hunter and Russell (2011), 107, with reference to Morgan (1998) 308 and Criore (2001) 194–195.



Zeus (17B, 20D–21A, 23D, 24C, 31F–32A), or touch upon a religious context.<sup>40</sup> Plutarch's religious sentiment obviously ranks high among his concerns, and he seems to be particularly wary as to the message poets may convey to readers with reference to the gods.

So, while Plutarch suggests that young men should be critical towards poetic statements, at the same time he takes on the role of directing them explicitly towards the best (cf. 20C: δει τῷ βελτίονι συνηγορεῖν, and 20D: πρὸς τὰ βελτίονα τῇ κρίσει τοὺς νέους κατευθύνωμεν; similarly at 33D: τοὺς νέους παρακαλεῖν πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον). Contradictory poetic sayings must not lead young men to reject poetry and blame poets for inconsistency. It is so, that poetry may deviate from truth to offer pleasure to the audience; and this deviation may carry with it certain dangers for the ethical training of young men (note the very platonic statements at 15A: βλάπτει καὶ διαφθείρει, and at 15C: ταρακτικὸν καὶ παράφορον – poetry is apt to cause damage and corrupt, and can be disturbing and misleading) (cf. *Rep.* 388a–d). The Homeric lines that follow, even if they are taken out of their original context, reinforce Plutarch's argument and summarise exactly this idea, i.e., that both good and bad elements are to be found in poetry, as the two are always commingled:<sup>41</sup> φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ, *Odys.* 4.230 (“drugs, many are healing when mixed, and many are baneful”, 15C); and straight after: ἔνθ' ἔνι μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ' ἴμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστύς/ πάρφασις, ἥ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων, *Il.* 14.216–7 (“in it is love-making, in it is desire, in it is sweet talk, deceitful persuasion which steals the wits even of the shrewd”, 15C<sup>42</sup> – the original context of the quotation refers to the magic power of love and passion, to which even the wisest of all gods, Zeus, can succumb). The medical vocabulary is interesting here: poetry is like a drug that can heal when mixed with other things, or it can be baneful. So it is the (intelligent) readers who will oppose good medicines, as it were, as an antidote to medicines with bad effects.<sup>43</sup> Later, at 16C (οὕτως ἐν ποιήμασι μεμιγμένον πιθανότητι ψεῦδος ἐκπλήττει καὶ ἀγαπάται) Plutarch will use again the same adjective, μεμιγμένον, to explicitly point out the fact that pure falsehood without plausibility would be far less appealing and effective for the readers.

40 Plutarch's theology is discussed, among others, by Flacelière (1974), Brenk (1977), and (1998), Valgiglio (1988), and Gallo (1996).

41 Cf. 25C–D, where the two Euripidean lines quoted (*Aeol.* fr. 21.3–4: οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο χωρὶς ἐσθλὰ καὶ κακά, / ἀλλ' ἔστι τις σύγκρασις) work in a double way: they emphasise the coexistence of “good” and “bad” in both gods and men's life, while they also allude to an important point of Plutarch's argument about the value of truth and imitation in poetry.

42 The translation here follows Hunter and Russell (2011).

43 Cf. Bréchet (2007b) 118–119.

Yet Plutarch recognises above all good intentions in poets' goals: Poets do not try to deceive the audience on purpose, yet their use of truth blended with fiction may be at times confusing and surprising. They often deviate from truth (cf. 16A: πολλὰ ψεύδονται αἰοῖδοι, "Poets tell many lies")<sup>44</sup> in favour of fiction, just because fiction (i.e., the myths) is more pleasant to the readers; and it is well-known that one of the important goals of poetry is to give pleasure to the readers. Therefore, Plutarch proposes a different approach to his readers, namely to justify and defend the poets by choosing the better sayings found in their works.<sup>45</sup> This positive approach to poetry can be also traced in his suggestion that, if something strikes the readers as completely misleading, or simply as unpleasant, they must consider the astonishment it causes (20F: πρὸς ἑκπλήξιν ἀνθρώπων – cf. above, at 16C, the word ἑκπλήττει) to be one of the poet's edifying methods, since it manages to attract their special attention and invites them to react immediately and amend, if possible, the dictum.

Plutarch takes also the role of a grammarian, as it were, and advises his readers to be alert to the nature of the poetic language. Poets often use figurative speech or words with their different meanings at various instances (cf., e.g., 22C, 22D–F, 23A–F, 24A ff.) – some typical examples are provided by Homer again (22D–E). For example, the word οἶκος can have various meanings at various instances; thus, it may refer to the "house" (*Odys.* 5.42, 7.77) or "property" (*Odys.* 4.318); similarly, the word βίος may refer to "life" (*Il.* 13.563) or "possession" (*Odys.* 13.419); and, again, ἀλύειν can have the meaning of "being distraught" (*Il.* 5.352) or "being beside oneself" (*Odys.* 18.333, or 393). Plutarch also warns against understanding all poetic words with their literal meaning, as poets may sometimes use, for example, the names of the gods either to refer to the gods themselves, or to certain faculties/characteristics of theirs. If the readers compare the lines in *Il.* 7.202–3: Ζεῦ πάτερ, Ἰδὼθ' ἐν μεδέων, κύδιστε μέγιστε, / δὸς νίκην Αἴαντι ("Father Zeus, who rule from Ida, most glorious, most great,

44 Cf. Said (2005, 149–150), who underlines the beautifying effect of "lies" in poetry in contrast to the truth which is rather "dry" and factual, and sometimes even unpleasant. Moreover, Halliwell (2011) offers an interesting discussion of the continuous dialogue between two competing poetic perspectives, namely "ecstasy" (poetry's emotional impact, and enchantment) and "truth" (the accurate, historical truth, if at all), which some ancient critics tried to bridge.

45 On this point compare Schläpfer (1950) 9–10, where he argues in favor of Plutarch's positive attitude to poetry, which may be explained as due to his admiration of what was achieved during the classical period, and which constitutes a deviation from Plato's polemic against poets. Wardman (1974, 171) rightly argues that Plutarch, in his *How a young man ...*, "keeps up his criticism of poetry, including tragedy, but offers also a partial defence. Poetry can be useful, even though it does refer to myth or the unreal". Poetry has indeed a great edifying potential.

grant victory to Ajax”, 23D)<sup>46</sup> with those in *Il.* 1.3–5: πολλὰς δ’ ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν/ ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν/ οἰωνοῖσι τε δαῖτα, Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή (“and sent down to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made the men themselves to be the spoil for dogs and birds of every kind; and thus the will of Zeus was brought to fulfillment”, 23D), they have to be aware of the different meanings that the name “Zeus” may carry; in the first case it stands for the god himself, whereas in the second case it stands more as an equivalent for Fate.<sup>47</sup> The same kind of remark applies also for Ares and Hephaestus, as Plutarch explains in 23A–C: the reference to Ares can imply either the god himself, or the war, exactly as the reference to Hephaestus can either imply the god himself, or the fire. Unless one comprehends the figurative or catachrestic use of words, one may be thrown into confusion and puzzlement.

Plutarch will go even as far as introducing a system of comparing and amending poetic quotations himself. The terminology he uses at several cases introduces the correct (and safe) method of approach which the young men must adopt when reading poetry: ἀντιπαράθῃσει (“set against”) (21B), παραδι-ορθώσεις (“corrected version”) (33C), παραβάλλων (“interpolate”) (33C), μεταγράφων/ μετέγραψεν (“rewrite”) (33C–D), ἐπανόρθωσιν (“amendment”) (22B; cf. 24A–B: ἐπανορθωτέον).<sup>48</sup> Plutarch recognises that the poets have a certain degree of authority – which he exploits opportunistically himself – but he still scrutinises their words and shows their occasional misinterpretations of truth or reality.<sup>49</sup> In the case of Homer, in particular, Plutarch seems to be seeking not merely the authority of a wise poet but also the basis for his moral teaching and rhetorical calibre. As the special terms listed above imply, the poets’ dicta are subject to the readers’ judgement, while the truths expressed by the poets are to be adjusted to the readers’ needs. The ethical register is undoubtedly a significant element that imbues all of Plutarch’s works, and the word ἐπανόρθωσις gives a tinge of that register even in this essay, where Plutarch proceeds to make personal suggestions for correcting and improving poetic sayings – a kind of poetic criticism – with moral criteria in mind.<sup>50</sup>

46 This line occurs again in *Il.* 3.276, 320 and 24.308.

47 Cf. Bowie (2014) 183; Opsomer (2014) 92.

48 Cf. Schläpfer (1950), 55. On ἐπανόρθωσις see also Gómez Cardó (1999), esp. pp. 375–376. The method of correcting statements, which Plutarch recommends, finds its roots in the Stoics.

49 Concerning the poetic criticism practised by Plutarch, Wardman (1974, 171–172) infers that “it is that of a philosopher who is used to turning to the poets for quotable examples and who is prepared to rewrite or bend what seems to him false doctrine”.

50 Cannata Fera (2000, esp. p. 99) elaborates not only on the rhetorical pattern of ἐπανόρθωσις but also on how rhetoric works generally in the educational essays of Plutarch.

Plutarch actually concedes to readers a significant degree of autonomy and authority. It is the readers who are then both empowered and assigned the task to judge what they read and decide for themselves what is good or bad for their education and ethical improvement. So, the issue is not only that poets do not simply dictate to us what kind of examples we should imitate or avoid; it also involves directly Plutarch's own approach to poetry, and the ways he believes that poetry can be useful and effective. The path for poetry to achieve its significant role goes through the readers: through their active participation in the educational procedure, through the careful reading of poetry, and their internalising of any truths which can be useful for their life. Rather than offering his readers a definitive answer about, simply, what is good and what is bad about poetry, Plutarch invites them to a more reflective appreciation of its value which shall lead them to the accomplishment of poetry's pedagogical and ethical aims. Plutarch teaches the readers to always choose and percolate what they read. Taking as a starting point Plutarch's own comments on the passages he quotes from Homer as well as from tragedy, the reader is urged to be critical towards poetry, and to value the poetic views or doctrines on a pragmatic rather than merely artistic level, so that poetry will finally become both useful in real-life terms and a preparatory stage to a deeper understanding of philosophy.

## 5 Poetry as an Introduction to Philosophy

Plutarch goes on to explore how closely poetry and philosophy are related (36C ff.). Poetry may indeed sometimes teach similar lessons to philosophy (cf. 36A and the lines of philosophical value quoted there from *Il.* 5.428–9). Therefore, Plutarch considers poetry to be a necessary part of education on account of its introductory role to philosophy (and beyond): poetry prepares the ground for the readers to understand what philosophers have said,<sup>51</sup> and, in particular, Homer was considered to be the first and best moral philosopher, according to Horace (*Epistles* 1.2).<sup>52</sup> Poetry can serve as the most effective pro-paedeutic to philosophy (cf. 15F–16A: “Poetry should not be avoided by those who are intending to pursue philosophy, but they should use poetry as an introductory exercise in philosophy (προφιλοσοφητέον), by training themselves

51 Compare Heirman's observation that “the importance of poetry is the purification of both poet and listener, and above all the preparation of the reader to a life of moral culture, the life of a philosopher” (1972, 189).

52 Graziosi (2008) 35.

habitually to seek the profitable in what gives pleasure, and to find satisfaction therein").<sup>53</sup> Blended with philosophy, poetry can redefine its objectives and make readers pursue philosophy via poetry. Although the poets' sources may differ greatly from those of the philosophers, since poets use fiction/myths as their source(s), both of them aim to point out to those who study them valuable moral and edifying messages. The emphasis which Plutarch lays on poetry as the first step of a young man's philosophical education and of his deeper understanding of it is demonstrated by the structure of this essay: *How a young man* ... starts and finishes with the discussion of that issue (chap. 1, esp. 15F–16A and chap. 14, 35F–37B); it is then apparently a strategic choice made by Plutarch to open his discussion of education and to end it by making a point about philosophy. Even if the readers, by the end of the essay, may question the benefits from poetry as such on the basis of the poets' occasional untruthfulness, they can have no doubts about poetry's true value as the best introductory exercise to philosophy.

Poetry attached to reality, as well as to philosophical truths, can be as useful as philosophy itself. Plutarch gives poetry unquestionable power and value, which, if ignored, would confine poetry within the boundaries of imitation and to its value as individual pieces of literature with no reflections of moral truths in it. After the young man will have studied poetry he will be able to perceive philosophical tenets more easily, as if looking upon the sun after leaving darkness, although accustomed for some time to a reflected light – a very powerful Platonic simile (36E).<sup>54</sup> This light may be only a reflection, as Plutarch says; however, it will allow the young man to see the truths of philosophy (and poetry) and it will dispose him positively toward them, inviting him not to run away but to engage deeper in them. The relation between poetry and philosophy is apparently double-sided: philosophy can benefit from poetry, and vice versa. And Homer may be a great, if not the greatest, poet of all, but he is a great philosopher, too.

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53 As Morgan aptly remarks (1998) 147, "Poetry must be shown to display *logos*; *logos* trains the *psyche* of the *nous* and is associated with *philosophia*, which produces virtue".

54 The image clearly echoes the cave simile from Plato's *Republic* (514a–518b, 532b) – cf. Sicking (1998), 113.

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## Clement of Alexandria's Reception of Homer

*Cornelia van der Poll*

As a Christian apologist Clement of Alexandria lived in the two worlds of the pagan mainstream and his Christian community.<sup>1</sup> He may have arrived in Alexandria around 180 CE, and he died between 211 and 215.<sup>2</sup> Clement's principal works are the *Protrepticus*, or *Exhortation to the Greeks*, the *Paedagogus*, and the *Stromateis*, or *Miscellanies*. The *Protrepticus* is the work in which Clement engages most with pagan culture and with authors such as Homer, Plato and Euripides.<sup>3</sup> It is presented as a rhetorical address to persuade pagans to convert to Christianity, with the *Paedagogus* as a guide for the newly converted and the *Stromateis* for those who are familiar with the faith.<sup>4</sup> In practice Clement's readership would have been almost entirely Christian, but also members of Alexandria's educated élite.<sup>5</sup> The text of the *Protrepticus* is dense with imagery, and the language is both stylized and allusive. It reflects many of the ethical concerns about the myths contained in Homer's poetry that are also raised by Christian apologists of the second century CE such as Aristides, Athenagoras, Tatian, and Justin, and addressed by pagan authors such as Maximus of Tyre and Heraclitus, author of the *Homeric Problems*. While the other apologists demonstrate an acquaintance with Greek culture in order to establish their credentials with an educated audience, Clement surpasses them by far in the

1 Some of the discussion in this chapter appeared previously in "Homer and Homeric Interpretation in the *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria" in F. Budelmann and P. Michelakis (eds.) (2001) *Homer, Tragedy and Beyond: Essays in Honour of P.E. Easterling* (London: Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies). I would like to thank Robert Lamberton, Teresa Morgan, Gavin Kelly, Olivia Stewart-Lester and Judith Kovacs for their helpful suggestions.

2 See Kovacs (2010) 68–69 for a discussion of the biographical evidence.

3 The extent of quotations from and references to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Clement's works suggests that he knew the entire text and was not relying on excerpts from anthologies. See Marrou *Pédagogue* vol. 1 p.73 and the discussion on the use of anthologies in Van Den Hoek (1996) 224. As for other authors, the evidence suggests that Clement quoted from memory as well as from *florilegia* and original texts (Van den Hoek (1996) 224, Gussen (1960) 11, 28–35, Zeegers (1971) 44–52). See Trapp (1997) xlviii on Christian apologists and their approach to Greek culture.

4 In *Paedagogus* 1.1.3.3 Clement sets out how the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus* relate to each other.

5 See Van den Hoek (2005) n. 19 and Steneker (1967) 69 on the intended audience.

breadth and depth of his learning and the accomplishment of his writing. The *Protrepticus* is polemical in its approach to Greek pagan culture and focusses on its dangers. The *Stromateis* is a more reflective and esoteric work in which Clement emphasises the positive aspects of pagan culture.<sup>6</sup> Some Christians were hostile to Greek *paideia*, and Clement's use of classical references and quotations throughout his works suggests that he was countering their criticism. At the same time he would have been answering critics such as Celsus, who accused Christians of turning their backs on *paideia* and therefore on their traditions.<sup>7</sup> Clement's works contain many Homeric quotations and allusions. The selection which follows is intended to give an impression of the various ways in which Clement read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and engaged with the views of other readers.

The relationship between pagan philosophy and Scripture was described in a variety of ways by Jewish and Christian writers. It was obvious to them that the pagan and Jewish or Christian worldviews had ideas in common, and they formulated explanations for this which reflected a range of attitudes towards pagan culture. These ideas include 'theft' or 'plagiarism', fallen angels transmitting wisdom to the pagans, learning philosophy from Moses and the Hebrew prophets (which may have happened in Egypt) and from the divine *logos*. Clement explores these ideas in the *Stromateis*.<sup>8</sup> He believes that the Greeks have their own independent knowledge of God and he quotes from Euripides to demonstrate that all people have an innate connection (ἔμφυτος κοινωνία) with the divine.<sup>9</sup> Clement followed Justin Martyr in adopting the concept of the divine *logos* from Middle Platonist philosophers, who had adapted it from the Stoics. For Clement and Christians before him, the *logos* was Jesus, who

6 Lambertson (1986) 79. See Rankin (2005) 29–34 on the different intended audiences of the *Stromateis* and *Protrepticus* and the greater frequency of quotations from Homer in the latter. Also see Kovacs (2017) on the treatment of various themes in the *Protrepticus* and *Stromateis*. Clement is more positive towards pagan philosophy, especially that of Plato, in the *Stromateis*.

7 See Sandnes (2009) 126 and 151 and Vermader (1977) 14 on Origen *Against Celsus* 6.12.

8 See Bauckham (1985) 323–325 and Dawson (1992) 200–201 and 204 on the various kinds of transmission of knowledge from God to the Greeks which are mentioned in the *Stromateis*. Bauckham shows how Clement uses these ideas in ways which reflect positively on the pagans. See MacDonald (1994) 20–21 for the idea of plagiarism in the works of Justin and Jewish authors and Reed (2005) 181–184 for Clement's approach to the transmission of knowledge by fallen angels in 1 Enoch. The idea of theft is also used to explain similarities among pagan texts. Heraclitus accuses Plato of stealing the idea of the soul consisting of distinct parts from Homer in *Homeric Problems* 17.4. He also accuses others of having stolen ideas from Homer in *Homeric Problems* 4.4 and 79.2 (Pontani (2005) 20).

9 *Protr.* 2.25.3. Clement elaborates on this idea at *Strom.* 5.87.2. See Lilla (1971) 15–16.

existed as the Word of God long before he became incarnate, an idea which is expressed at the beginning of John's Gospel.<sup>10</sup> The *logos* is also dimly present among the Greeks, mainly in their philosophy.<sup>11</sup> However, at *Protr.* 7.74.7 Clement says that the Greek poets, as distinct from the philosophers, possess "sparks of the *logos*" (ἐναύσματά τινα τοῦ λόγου), but that they did not pursue it fully.<sup>12</sup>

## 1 Homer's Knowledge of Christian Truth in the *Stromateis*

Clement finds some instances where Homer shows knowledge of the truth, although this knowledge is limited and haphazard. When Homer says something correctly about the gods, he speaks like a crow imitating a human voice, saying words without understanding what they refer to: "And in this way Homer, too, said 'father of gods and men' not knowing who the father is and in what sense he is the father."<sup>13</sup> This assessment chimes with Plato's complaint in *Republic* 598d–601b that Homer's poetry simply contains the imitation of knowledge rather than any real insight.<sup>14</sup>

In the passages discussed below, Clement shows how he sees the relationship between Scripture and Homeric lines which seem to deal with the same subjects.<sup>15</sup> *Stromateis* 5 chapter 14 in particular is devoted to showing how ideas from Scripture occur in pagan authors.<sup>16</sup> Clement explains how Greek philosophers adopted ideas from the books of Moses on God, angels, virtue, cosmology, and other subjects. At *Strom.* 5.14.99.5 he shows how Menelaus' curse at *Il.* 7.99, "May you all become water and earth" reflects the creation

10 *Protr.* 1.6.3. The theology of the *logos* was substantially developed by Philo (Winston (1985) 9–25), and John's concept shares some of its characteristics (Attridge (2005) 116–117).

11 At *Strom* 1.7.37 Clement explains that the philosophy of the Greeks derives from God. See Lilla (1971) 16–27 on how Greek philosophers were inspired by the *logos*.

12 At *Strom.* 5.11.70.2 Clement calls Euripides "the philosopher of the stage".

13 *Strom.* 6.17.151. See the discussion of this passage in Lamberton (1986) 79. This suggests a view similar to that which A.A. Long identified among the Stoics of the poet as nothing more than an ignorant conduit for ancient myths about the gods (Long (1992) 64–65).

14 Sandnes points out that this view of Homer and Greek culture was taken up by Josephus and Augustine and suggests that it may have been a traditional one in Jewish and Christian circles (Sandnes (2009) 50–51).

15 Daniélou gives a detailed survey of the passages which follow and others and shows Clement's varied use of Homeric scenes and passages as well as other Greek myths (Daniélou (1973) 89–99).

16 Le Boulluec suggests that the series of quotations from Greek poets which are shown to be analogous to Greek scripture in *Strom.* 5.14 derives from a Jewish source, and that Clement may have taken it from Aristobulus (Le Boulluec (1981) 311).

of humans from clay in *Genesis*.<sup>17</sup> Clement takes the cosmological reading of Ocean as water and Tethys as earth in lines such as *Il.* 14.206 a step further at *Strom.* 5.14.100.5 and claims that Homer is telling about the separation of water and earth at the creation in different words (περιφράζων) when he says that they have not been to bed together for a long time.<sup>18</sup> The scholia on this line also interpret it in the light of cosmology, but Clement makes the further link with what he sees as the true, biblical creation-story, which means that this line reflects the truth as it appears in Scripture. The shield of Achilles was already read as a cosmological allegory, but Clement also takes this reading further at *Strom.* 5.14.101.4 when he says that Homer is “describing the world according to Moses” (χρῶσιν κατὰ Μωυσέα).<sup>19</sup> These lines from Homer are added as an afterthought to the serious discussion of the philosophers’ ideas, as if to show that the content of Scripture has reached also Greek culture more generally.

A T-scholion on *Od.* 9.411 shows that some readers were concerned by the apparent injustice in the Cyclopes’ idyllic lifestyle, given that they were said to be impious. This issue seems to have been much discussed, as it takes up a great deal of space in the scholia, where the solution given is that only Polyphemus does not obey Zeus, as he says at *Od.* 9.275; the others recognize the authority of Zeus, as they make clear at *Od.* 9.411.<sup>20</sup> Philo also addresses this perceived injustice at *De Providentia* 2.66. Clement picks up on the controversial nature of the two lines at *Strom.* 5.14.116.1, but he ignores this question. Instead, he attributes a Christian significance to the two different epithets, in which he finds an awareness of the Father and Son as distinct members of the Trinity:

17 The bT-scholion on *Il.* 7.99 reads the line in the same way, explaining that Hector prays that the men may be dissolved into that which they consist of.

18 *Strom.* 5.14.100.5. See the D-scholion in A on *Il.* 14.201, Theophilus *Ad Autolyicum* 2.5 and Athenagoras *Legatio* 18. The identification of Tethys with the Earth relies on the etymology τιθήνη, ‘nurse’, e.g., in Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 34.

19 Heraclitus also takes the shield to be intended as an allegorical model of the cosmos (*Homeric Problems* 48). See the scholia bT on *Il.* 8.16 and A on *Il.* 15.18 and 189 for other Homeric verses interpreted as cosmology. Clement gives more Christian interpretations of Homeric lines at *Strom.* 5.14.107 where Homer and other poets show awareness of the seventh day as being holy and at *Strom.* 5.14.130.2 where the golden scales of Zeus at *Il.* 8.69 and 22.209 show that God is just.

20 See scholia V and HQ on *Od.* 9.275 and H, T and V on *Od.* 9.106. This solution seems to go back to the Sophist Antisthenes (fr.53 and Sch. T on *Od.* 9.106). See Richardson (1975) 78.

And now Homer also seems to talk about the Father and the Son here, as if he has had an accurate inspiration (ὥς ἔτυχεν μαντείας εὐστόχου),<sup>21</sup> saying:

If you are alone and no-one harms you, it is not possible to escape the affliction of great Zeus in any way. For the Cyclopes do not heed Zeus who bears the aegis.

*Od.* 9.410–11 and 275<sup>22</sup>

Since 'great Zeus' and 'Zeus who bears the aegis' are not identical, Clement finds awareness in these lines of God as two distinct persons.<sup>23</sup> This use of the word μαντεία is significant. The verb μαντεύεται in earlier Christian writers describes the bogus prophesying of unbelievers, but in Clement's work it refers to ideas which show true, if limited, understanding of God.<sup>24</sup> At *Paedagogus* 1.6.36.1 Homer speaks from inspiration (μαντεύεται), but he does it unintentionally (ἄκων). Again, Clement's admiration for Homer's philosophical thought is qualified; he hits on the truth by chance rather than through serious effort like Plato and other philosophers.

Homer's anthropomorphic portrayal of the gods is generally wrong and morally offensive, but he can show some unexpected insight, as Clement shows at *Strom.* 5.14.116.4–117.3:

And, most surprising (τὸ παραδοξότατον), Homer seems to know (γινώσκειν φαίνεται) the divine, even though he portrays gods undergoing human sufferings. [...] For he says:

Why, son of Peleus, do you, a mortal, pursue me, an immortal god, with your swift feet? Have you not yet realized that I am a god?

*Il.* 22.8–10

He has shown that it is not possible for a mortal to capture or to comprehend the divine, either with his feet or his hands or his eyes or, in short,

21 Clement uses the same expression of Plato and Pythagoras at *Strom.* 5.5.29.4. A similar example occurs at *Strom.* 2.19.102.4, where Homer is described as προμαντευόμενος.

22 Le Boulluec thinks that the combination of *Od.* 9.275 and 410–11 reflects the arrangement of the lines in a Christian *florilegium* (Le Boulluec (1981) 341).

23 Buffière (1973) 360–1 and n.86 and Le Boulluec (1981) vol.2, 340–1 on *Strom.* 5.14.116.1–2.

24 Clement also uses μαντεύεται of Plato, Solon, Heraclitus of Ephesus and the Sybil (Dinan (2008) 42 and 47–48).

with his body. "To whom have you likened the Lord? Or to which likeness have you likened him? (*Isaiah* 40.18)," says scripture.

By juxtaposing the two texts, Clement shows that Scripture has more authority, but he also shows what really lies behind the Homeric lines.<sup>25</sup> Homer shows true knowledge about God, probably without realizing it. Theophilus quotes these same lines from the *Iliad* to ridicule the idea that a god can run away from a man, and thus show how wrong Greek religion is,<sup>26</sup> and Clement reads many episodes in that spirit in the *Protrepticus*. Here, however, he reads the lines in a positive, and not strictly literal, sense and points out the similarity with Scripture in order to show to what extent true theology has penetrated the works of the Greek poets.

## 2 Homer as Theologian in the *Protrepticus*

The *Protrepticus* (Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἑλλήνας) is composed in the style of an oratorical display,<sup>27</sup> with the first seven chapters made up of a polemic against all aspects of pagan religion, and the last five an energetic plea to accept the salvation offered by Christ as the *logos* of God. Clement's language is stylized Attic Greek, and the Greek culture which he holds up for criticism is largely a literary construct, consisting of catalogues of ancient cults and myths.<sup>28</sup> In this context he uses Homer as a representative of Greek culture and *paideia*.<sup>29</sup> In books 2, 3 and 4 Clement catalogues the absurdities and depravities of pagan religion as it is expressed in myths, cult and art. Many of these examples are shared with the other apologists writing in Greek.<sup>30</sup> In *Protrepticus* 12, by contrast, Clement uses passages from Homer in the context of urging the audience towards salvation. Here he is interested in showing how the words and images of Homer support the Christian message.

25 See Den Boer (1940) 74 on this passage.

26 Theophilus *Ad Autolyicum* 1.9. See Edsman (1997) 388. Achilles' verbal attack against Apollo is criticized by Plato (*Republic* 391a), and Maximus of Tyre in turn quotes *Il.* 22.9 when he criticizes Socrates for finding fault with Homer.

27 Emmett identifies several instructions from Menander Rhetor on how to construct a speech put into practice in the *Protrepticus* (Emmett (2001) 174). See Zeegers (1972) 283 and Rankin (2006) 126.

28 Emmett (2001) 226. Clement introduces his *Stromateis* as follows: "Now this book of mine is not a piece of writing artfully crafted for display ..." (*Strom.* 1.1.11.1), no doubt to contrast it with the *Protrepticus*.

29 See Hunter (2004) 250 on this kind of approach to Homer in the Second Sophistic.

30 See Pouderon and Pierre (2003) 345–347.



Clement begins this book with song as a metaphor for Greek culture on the one hand and the *logos* of God on the other. He debunks the story that the singer Eunomus inspired a cicada to come and sit on his lyre and sing when his string broke; the cicada did it of its own accord and did not manifest some special power of the singer. The Greeks who tell this story think that the cicada is the performer of the music (ὑποκριτῆς [...] μουσικῆς, *Protr.* 1.1.3), but its music derives from God.<sup>31</sup> The delusion of the Greeks is manifest most of all in their poetry and drama and in their religious cult, particularly mystery religion, and in the visual arts which portray the myths. They mistake appearance for reality. Clement urges his audience to turn away from these pointless practices and turn to the truth. He presents the *logos* as “my Eunomus” (*Protr.* 1.2.4). Instead of the old songs in the Phrygian, Lydian, and Doric modes, this Eunomus sings the new and true Levitical song, which is described with a line from the *Odyssey*: “soothing pain and making all ills forgotten” (*Od.* 4.221); Helen’s drug takes away the ill effects of Dionysiac worship.<sup>32</sup> With this image Clement shows how he will deal with the poetry and ideas of the Greeks. Eunomus took his cue from the cicada which was singing to God.<sup>33</sup> The line from the *Odyssey* now describes the impact of a new way of life based on the truth. The use of this one line from Homer here is symbolic: even as Clement urges his audience to abandon their traditional songs and stories about the gods and their old cults, he signals that that their poetry can serve a new, better purpose.

Although the discussion in the *Protrepticus* draws on a wide range of sources, Homer is set up as the representative of Greek culture and its deluded theology. Clement follows the account of Herodotus 2.53 of Homer and Hesiod as creators of Greek theology (ὅσα θεολογεῖ Ὀμηρος, *Protr.* 2.26.6),<sup>34</sup> and he later contrasts this θεογονία ποιητικὴ of the poets with the θεολογία ἀληθινὴ of the Stoic Cleanthes at *Protr.* 6.72.1.<sup>35</sup> In his polemic against Greek religion he fol-

31 See Marcovich (1997) 452–453 on this story and its sources.

32 *Protr.* 1.2.4. This line was commonly quoted, for instance, at Plutarch *Quaestiones Convivales* 1.1 (614c). Zeegers lists more quotations (Zeegers (1972) 265). See also the discussion of this passage in Zeegers (1972) 272 and De Jauregui (2008) 114. The ‘new song’ occurs widely in the Psalms, e.g., at *Psalms* 33.3.

33 Stapert (2007) 51. See Lugaesi (2011) 252 on the story of Eunomus.

34 From *Protr.* 2.26 Clement follows a traditional account in explaining how primitive people were inspired by the heavenly bodies, harvests, natural disasters and emotions to invent and worship gods. The sixth of his seven causes of false religion is the Theogony of Hesiod and Homer’s account of the gods. This account of the seven causes of religion is similar to Aetius *Placita* 1.6.10–15. See De Jauregui (2008) 148 on *Protr.* 2.26.1–6 and Burkert (1985) 313–315. The etymology θεοὺς ἐκ τοῦ θεῖν comes from Plato *Cratylus* 397d2.

35 This dismissal of Homer as theologian contrasts with Heraclitus’ description of Homer as a hierophant (ιεροφάντης, *Homeric Problems* 76.1), a term which Clement applies to Moses

lows Justin Martyr's strongly negative account of the pagan gods as *daimones*.<sup>36</sup> Clement follows other Christian apologists in stating his belief that the gods of myths were in reality only mortals.<sup>37</sup>

The debate about Homer's morality and the value of his poetry which we see in the works of both Christian apologists and pagan authors of the second century CE takes its inspiration from Socrates' objections to Homer's portrayal of the gods in the *Republic*.<sup>38</sup> Tatian had no time for any pagan authors, including Plato,<sup>39</sup> but others saw Plato as supporting their own case. Athenagoras reiterates Plato's criticism of Zeus weeping over Sarpedon and Justin co-opts Socrates as an ally in the battle against the religion of Homer and the other poets,<sup>40</sup> while Maximus of Tyre takes on the challenge of defending both authors.<sup>41</sup> Some pagan authors weighed in by treating Homer's poetry as profoundly philosophical, such as Heraclitus and Ps.-Plutarch, author of *On the Life and Poetry of Homer*.<sup>42</sup> Clement's adversaries the Valentinian Gnostics also seem to have taken this line.<sup>43</sup> Clement enters the debate wholeheartedly in the

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at *Protr.* 2.25.1. Clement's critical attitude towards myths about the gods in Homer is typical of Christian literature of this period. See Sandnes (2009) 92–93 on Ps.-Justin *Oratio ad Graecos* and *Cohortatio ad Graecos*.

- 36 Justin bases his idea that the pagan gods, or *daimones*, are the offspring of fallen angels and mortal women on 1 *Enoch* 6–11 in his *Second Apology* chapter 4 (Minns and Parvis). He tells how these *daimones* induced the mythmakers and poets to attribute a divine nature to them. Clement links this idea to *Psalms* 95.5 at *Protr.* 4.62: "The prophetic *logos* refutes the custom (τὴν συνήθειαν) [of worshipping statues] very clearly and succinctly: 'For all the gods of the gentiles are images of *daimones*, but God created the heavens' and the things in heaven." See Dawson (1992) 194. Justin draws on a biblical tradition of *daimones* as false gods (*Exodus* 20.3–5, *Revelation* 9.20).
- 37 *Protr.* 2.29.1–3, Rhee (2005) 62 and n. 140. At *Sibylline Oracles* 3.429 the Sibyl prophesies that Homer will create gods who are in fact people.
- 38 See Trapp (1997) 149–150. Anthropomorphic gods presented a problem to Homer's defenders, and Ps.-Plutarch deals with it by saying that Homer used them in his epics as a way of conveying the idea of the divine to his audience (*Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* 13). Maximus of Tyre also shows awareness of this issue when he argues in *Oration* 2.3 that the human body is the most appropriate image for the gods.
- 39 Tatian mentions the story that Plato was sold into slavery after falling out with Dionysius I, the Sicilian tyrant (*Oratio ad Graecos* 2.1). Heraclitus also alludes to the story as part of his attack on Plato (*Homeric Problems* 78).
- 40 Athenagoras *Legatio* 21; Justin *First Apology* 10. See also *Second Apology* 5. Justin regarded Platonism as preparation for the gospel (Barnard (1997) 14).
- 41 Maximus of Tyre *Oration* 17.
- 42 Ps.-Plutarch's writing is not polemical, and he treats the issue as uncontroversial (Keaney and Lamberton (1996) 10).
- 43 Irenaeus of Lyons describes Homer as the "prophet" of the Valentinians (*Adversus Haereses* 4.33.3), and Hippolytus of Rome makes the same point about the Naasenes

*Protrepticus*.<sup>44</sup> In chapters 6 and 7 he contrasts the wise insights of Plato and other philosophers about the true nature of God with the outrageous stories of the poets, which only serve to discredit their gods. In his *Homeric Problems* Heraclitus, who was probably writing some decades before Clement,<sup>45</sup> argues the opposite case, defending Homer vigorously from accusations of the kind brought by Plato by offering responses to charges of immorality.<sup>46</sup> Heraclitus places emphasis on the criticisms made by Homer's accusers as part of his rhetorical presentation, and reflects the tradition of defending historical and literary characters.<sup>47</sup> Several of these criticisms are echoed by Clement in the *Protrepticus*, and a comparison between the *Homeric Problems* and the *Protrepticus* helps to give us an idea of the kind of debate in which Clement was participating.<sup>48</sup> He ignores solutions of the kind proposed by Heraclitus which are based on allegorical reading. Instead, he simply takes the passages at face value and demonstrates how they offend against decency.<sup>49</sup>

At *Protr.* 2.35.2 Clement embarks on a discussion of the inferiority of the Greek gods even to humans. His line of attack is to show that they were portrayed behaving like servants in myths. He objects to Aphrodite bringing Helen to Paris' bed:

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(*Refutatio* 5.8.1) (MacDonald (1994) 260). See Kovacs (2010) 71 on Clement's polemical treatment of the Valentinians.

44 Tatian takes a similarly polemical stance towards the pagan gods in his *Oration to the Greeks*, e.g., chapters 10 and 34, but his attacks are far briefer than Clement's.

45 For the problems concerning the dating of Heraclitus, see Russell and Konstan (2005) xi–xiii and Pontani (2005) 9–13.

46 *Homeric Problems* 4.1. See Pontani (2005) 21. Relatively few of Plato's objections are actually addressed by Heraclitus. He is more concerned with defending Homer from the kind of accusations of blasphemy which were made by Christian apologists: "He was impious in everything if he did not say anything allegorically." (*Homeric Problems* 1.1).

47 Russell and Konstan liken Heraclitus' defence of Homer to the defences of Helen by Gorgias and Isocrates (Russell and Konstan (2005) xxviii).

48 A comparison of *Homeric Problems* 26–33 and *Protrepticus* 2.29–36 is particularly interesting, as these sections deal with the same five episodes: Ares being imprisoned in a jar (*Il.* 5.385–7), Hephaestus being thrown from heaven (*Il.* 1.591), the labours of Heracles, Aphrodite and Helen (*Il.* 3.424) and gods being wounded (*Il.* 5.334–43, 382–415 and 855–63). Zeegers suggests that Heraclitus may have been among Clement's sources of quotations for the *Protrepticus* (Zeegers (1971) 71. See Dawson (1992) 202–203 on Heraclitus and the *Protrepticus*).

49 Tatian, by contrast, rejects and ridicules allegorical reading as practised by Metrodorus of Lampsacus (*Oration* 21.3). Athenagoras also rejects allegorical interpretation (*Legatio* 22.2–3).

We read of Aphrodite, how, like some uninhibited little maid, she brought the stool for Helen, and placed it in front of her seducer, in order that she might entice him to intercourse.

This line was problematic for Zenodotus, who replaced the passage with a single line, as it was inappropriate (ἀπρεπές) for Aphrodite to fetch a stool.<sup>50</sup> Zenodotus' extreme remedy provoked a defence from Aristarchus, who pointed out that Aphrodite, was, after all, disguised as a servant. Heraclitus quotes Homer's critics as objecting that Aphrodite acts unseemingly (ἀπρεπώς) by seducing Helen for Paris.<sup>51</sup> He goes on to explain that Aphrodite is the madness (ἄφροσύνη) of desire, and that she needs to encourage Helen, who is no longer so much in love with Paris. For Clement and Heraclitus the controversy around these lines presents an opportunity to explore the nature of the gods and to argue for a particular approach to Homer's theology. Clement argues that these gods are entirely unfit to worship, while Heraclitus presents the poem as a philosophical allegory, above such criticism.

Both Heraclitus and Clement go on to discuss the wounding of Aphrodite next, and their introductions to the topic set out their opposite approaches. Here is Clement:

It follows naturally from this to show these amorous and passionate gods of yours as suffering from every kind of human experience. "For indeed their flesh is mortal" (adapted from *Il.* 21.568). Homer gives evidence of this quite specifically when he introduces Aphrodite as crying shrilly and loudly over her wound, and when he tells how the arch-warrior himself, Ares, was wounded in the flank by Diomedes.

*Protr.* 2.36.1

Heraclitus begins like this:

But a great dramatic show is put on against Homer by those who, in their ignorance, want to denounce him for introducing wounded gods in the fifth book, first Aphrodite, wounded by Diomedes, and then Ares.

HERACLITUS *Homeric Problems* 30.1

<sup>50</sup> Sch. A on *Il.* 3.423. See Dawson (1992) 202.

<sup>51</sup> Heraclitus *Homeric Problems* 28.4.

Heraclitus is clearly responding to someone who is bringing the same criticisms as Clement and who objects to the suffering and undignified gods.<sup>52</sup> Clement's criticism of Homer's description of the Prayers in *Iliad* 9 takes up another existing debate.<sup>53</sup> "These ghosts are your gods, spectres, and with them those 'lame and wrinkled cross-eyed' Prayers, daughters of Thersites rather than Zeus ..." (*Protr.* 4.56.1). Heraclitus responds again to a criticism very much like that of Clement: "Some people are so ignorant that they blame Homer also with regard to the Prayers, that he insulted the offspring of Zeus in this way by giving them an ugly and deformed appearance ..." (*Homeric Problems* 37.1). If Clement is aware of Heraclitus' allegorical interpretations of these passages, he is being deliberately obtuse.

The song about Ares and Aphrodite from *Odyssey* 8 is raised in Plato's *Republic* 390c where Glaucon and Socrates agree that, along with the seduction of Zeus, it is the sort of thing which should not be tolerated in poetry. While Clement only alludes to Socrates' objection, Maximus of Tyre links this episode with it explicitly.<sup>54</sup> In the second century it was central to the battle over Homer's reputation.<sup>55</sup> This is how Heraclitus introduces it: "So let us now pass over everything else and turn to the continued grievous charge (κατηγορίαν) brought by [Homer's] accusers" (*Homeric Problems* 69.1).<sup>56</sup> Clement sets out his objection to the gods' sexual activities and their laughter at *Protr.* 4.58.3–59.2 in an allusion to the *Republic*.<sup>57</sup> He presents the Ares and Aphrodite episode vividly and addresses Homer directly, as if to hold him accountable for his immoral characters:

Further, the marriages of gods, their acts of child-begetting and child-bearing which are narrated and the adulteries which are sung, their feasts which are portrayed in comedy and their laughter alongside their drinking urge me to cry out, even if I wish to be silent, alas such atheism! You

52 The second-century Christian apologists Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autolycum* 1.9) and Athenagoras (*Legatio* 21.3) also object to the wounding of Aphrodite.

53 See Buffière (1973) 336–367. Domaradzki (2021) discusses the allegorical reading of this passage by Heraclitus in contrast with Clement's literal reading.

54 Maximus of Tyre *Oration* 18.5.

55 For other Christian apologists it was about demonstrating more generally that Greek pagan religion was inferior to Christianity, e.g., Athenagoras *Legatio* 21; Aristides *Apology* 10.

56 This passage was a traditional target for accusations of immorality against Homer. Xenophanes objected to it before Plato (fragment 21B11 D-K). Plutarch (*De aud. Poet.* 19e–20a) reports an interpretation of the scene as the conjunction of the planets Mars and Venus.

57 Plato *Republic* 389a on *Iliad* 1.599.

have made heaven a stage and the divine has been turned into drama for you and with the masks of demons you have made a comedy out of that which is holy, and the true worship you have turned into a satyr-play through the reverence of demons.

Then playing the harp he began to sing the beautiful song. (*Od.* 8.266)  
Sing us the lovely song (τὴν φωνὴν τὴν καλὴν), Homer.

About the love of Ares and fair-girdled Aphrodite; how first they made love in the halls of Hephaestus in secret. He gave many gifts, and he shamed the bed and couch of king Hephaestus. (*Od.* 8.267–270)

Stop the song, Homer. It is not good (καλὴ); it teaches adultery.<sup>58</sup>

Clement here returns to acting, which he uses as a metaphor for dishonesty, and the sordid aspects of pagan religion, which he links with Dionysiac worship through the satyr-play. He takes up the theme of song and contrasts the ignoble song of Homer, standing in for Demodocus, with the true song of the *logos*. Heraclitus, on the other hand, proceeds to defend Homer against Plato's accusation of impiety and instead attack the sexual misbehaviour of Socrates in terms which mirror this attack by Clement against Homer.<sup>59</sup> Thus Clement is not only following Plato's lead in condemning Homer's impious portrayal of the gods,<sup>60</sup> but is also engaged in a lively polemic against Homer's defenders.

The issue of mortals becoming immortal illustrates how Clement engages indirectly in scholarly debates in order to undermine pagan religion as part of his polemic. Heracles, the Dioscuri, and Asclepius were commonly listed together by Christian apologists in their discussions on Greek religion as mortals who became gods,<sup>61</sup> something which would have been problematic for Christians.<sup>62</sup> At *Protr.* 2.30.4–7 Clement continues his argument that the

58 Athenagoras says in a similar context, "Be quiet, Homer!" (*Legatio* 21.3).

59 Heraclitus defends Homer at *Homeric Problems* 76 and moves on to his attack on Socrates in chapter 77. He quotes Socrates asking the Muses to help him with his story. "What about, I might ask, o most marvellous Plato?" asks Heraclitus. The story is about a boy and his lover, and Heraclitus responds with disgust. This is contrasted with Homer's invocations to the Muses, where he asks their help to sing about dignified subjects (Plato *Phaedrus* 237a quoted in Heraclitus *Homeric Problems* 77.5–11). See Russell (2003) 231–233. A similar attack on Socrates occurs at Maximus of Tyre *Oration* 18.5.

60 See Lamberton (1986) 19.

61 Aristides (*Apology* 10), Justin (*First Apology* 21.4). Athenagoras (*Legatio* 29.1–4), Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 21.1) and Theophilus (*Ad Autolyicum* 1.9) mention some or all of these. Vermander argues that Clement is responding to Celsus' statement that Heracles, Asclepius, and the Dioscuri became gods after their death (Vermander (1977) 10–11).

62 E.g., *Aristides Apology* 7. Several Christian authors living in the Roman Empire expressed particular hostility to the idea that emperors became deified after their death (Rankin

gods of myths were not immortal and deals with myths about mortals who have been deified. He praises Homer for reporting accurately that Castor and Pollux were both dead at *Iliad* 3.243–4, unlike the author of the *Cypria*, who stated falsely that Pollux was immortal. His next target is Heracles, held up as a philosopher-hero by generations of Greek writers and philosophers,<sup>63</sup> and whose apotheosis caused difficulties in interpretation in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>64</sup> Clement here reflects the existing concerns of ancient scholars about the immortality of Heracles. He continues with an interpretation of *Odyssey* 21.26: “And besides this he has proven Heracles to be an idol (εἶδωλον). For ‘Heracles, knowing great deeds’ is ‘a man’. And so even Homer himself knew that Heracles was a mortal man.”<sup>65</sup> Heracles’ εἶδωλον is the ghost which Odysseus meets in the underworld, but Clement uses the word to suggest that Heracles is a false god or idol (the word is often used in this sense in the New Testament).<sup>66</sup> Clement evokes the controversy over Heracles’ immortality by alluding to *Od.* 11.602–4 and to the debate over whether the lines are genuine, but with his pun on the word εἶδωλον he gives it a Christian sense. By branding the shade in Hades an idol he dismisses the worship of an immortal Heracles as idol worship.

### 3 Moral Readings of the Odyssey

The story of Odysseus resisting temptation as he strives towards his home is a theme which fits in with the ideas of many philosophical traditions as well as

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(2006) 144). Justin links the supposed immortality of the Dioscuri and Heracles with the deification of emperors at *Apology* 21.3.

63 E.g., Heraclitus *Homeric Problems* 33 and Maximus of Tyre *Oration* 15.6, following earlier authors who made Heracles a moral *exemplum* such as Seneca at *De Constantia Sapientis* 2.1 (Liapis (2006) 48, Montiglio (2011) 17, Galinsky (1972) 188–190). See Burkert (1985) 210.

64 See Kullmann (1985) 17 for the treatment of Heracles and the Dioscuri in the *Iliad*.

65 Clement does not quote the better-known lines on the fate of Heracles, namely *Il.* 18.117–9 and *Od.* 11.601–4, discussed in Liapis (2006) 50 and 54–55. An A-scholion on *Il.* 18.117 (“Not even mighty Heracles escaped death”) explains: “Because he did not know that Heracles was immortal.” Ps.-Plutarch (c.123) uses the otherwise problematic description of Heracles’ ghost in the underworld at *Od.* 11.601–2 to show that Homer understood the relationship between the body and the soul as taught by the Pythagoreans.

66 Zeegers (1971) 85–86. The word is used in this sense in, e.g., 1 *Corinthians* 10.19 and *Romans* 2.22. *Od.* 11.602–4, which make Heracles immortal, were considered to be an interpolation. See Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 114, and Heitsch (1972) 8–10.

with the Christian message.<sup>67</sup> The Stoics regarded Odysseus as the model of a man immune to hardship, pleasure, or fear, and the Middle Platonists made popular the metaphor of Odysseus as a hero of reason journeying towards a spiritual home and avoiding distractions along the way.<sup>68</sup> While Clement drew on previous uses of this imagery from the *Odyssey*, he transformed it into a subtle and versatile vehicle for his message. The influence of Clement's re-working of these scenes on later generations of Christian writers is clearly evident.<sup>69</sup>

Clement introduces Odysseus' journey past the Sirens near the end of the *Protrepticus* in chapter 12, but earlier he subverts this ethical reading of Odysseus' travels. At *Protr.* 9.86.2 he says of those who do not strive for salvation:

The rest, clinging to the world, as certain seaweeds to the rocks of the sea, place little value on immortality, like the old man of Ithaca, longing not for the truth and their fatherland in heaven or indeed for the light which truly exists, but for the smoke.

The image of seaweed clinging to a rock is taken from Plato, *Republic* 61ud, where the seaweed stands for things which obscure the true nature of the soul and prevents it from reaching the divine world. Clement's interpretation is based on *Od.* 1.57–9, and he links the rejection of the afterlife to Odysseus' refusal of Calypso's offer of immortality. He subordinates Homer's text to that of Plato and uses the image of Odysseus yearning for Ithaca, the mortal world, to show how Homer and the Greeks do not understand that they should be striving for the divine. Clement does not name Odysseus but calls him the "old man of Ithaca" (ὁ Ἰθακήσιος γέρων), creating an opposition between old age and youth, or mortality and immortality.<sup>70</sup> A Gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi Library,

67 MacDonald (1994) 22, Pépin (1976) 144–145 and Buffière (1973) 365–391. This kind of reading already occurs in Plato (Murray (1996) 164–165 on *Republic* 390d and Segal (1978) 322). Also see Ps.-Plutarch 126. Maximus of Tyre dwells especially on good and wicked characters receiving their just deserts in the *Odyssey* (*Oration* 26.9). See Den Boer (1940) 112 for more examples of quotations and images from the *Odyssey* in Clement's works. Clement may also have Philo's allegorical treatment of the travels of Abraham, Jacob and the Israelites in mind. See Berthelot (2012) 170.

68 Lamberton (1986) 53 and 71. The Middle Platonist and contemporary of Clement Numenius connected the prophecy that Odysseus would travel to people who 'do not know the sea' (*Od.* 11.122–3) with a journey from material to spiritual existence (Numenius fr.33 Des Places). See Buffière (1973) 413–417 and 461–464.

69 See Pépin (1982) 13–17 on Clement's possible Platonic sources and his influence.

70 See Amerio (1979) and Pépin (1982) 12 on this passage. Both suggest that the appellation "old man" refers to the rejection of immortality and contrasts the old custom of the Greeks with the new message of Christianity. Methodius of Olympus, active about a century after



the *Exegesis on the Soul*, takes the scene in the conventional way, with Ogygia symbolizing the “place of erring” and Ithaca the fatherland, which is associated with salvation.<sup>71</sup> Maximus of Tyre uses the image of Odysseus seeing the smoke of Ithaca to illustrate how a soul recognizes beauty in the material world at *Oration* 21.7, where he paraphrases Plato’s *Phaedrus*.<sup>72</sup> Clement clearly means to subvert such readings in order to show how the Greeks fail to strive for eternal life.

There is a sense of progression from this image of attachment to the material world when Clement introduces the journey past the Sirens in Book 12, after explaining that Christ is the *logos* which brings about salvation. The *Odyssey*-passage opens his exhortation at *Protr.* 12.118.1–4, where he resumes the theme of the wickedness of pagan religion and cult of the earlier books, but in a more urgent and lively tone. Clement achieves a striking rhetorical effect by blending the words of Homer and Scripture to create a patchwork of words from different sources.<sup>73</sup> This passage is followed by an equally dramatic one in which he re-creates the frenzied dance of the Bacchantes from Euripides’ *Bacchae* and contrasts the wicked Dionysiac cult with a new sacred mystery which leads to salvation. Homer and Euripides both show a situation which offers a choice between destruction and salvation.

Let us flee from custom (ἡ συνήθεια), let us flee it like a dangerous headland or the threat of Charybdis or the mythical Sirens. It strangles a man, it turns him away from the truth, it leads him away from life, it is a trap, it is a pit, it is a hole (βόθρος), a greedy evil is custom.

‘Steer the ship away from that smoke and wave.’ (*Od.* 12.219–20)

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Clement, refers to Odysseus as “the old man of Ithaca” at *De Autexusio* 1.1 (see Rahner (1963) 352 and Amerio (1979) 37), where he seems to blame him for wanting to hear the “song of death” of the Sirens rather than the divine voice. There is an ambiguous reference to Phthia at Plato *Crito* 44b, where it appears to stand for a spiritual home, but becomes a refuge for which one abandons one’s duty (Segal (1978) 320).

71 Quoted in Pépin (1982) 17. See MacDonald (1994) 260.

72 Also see Amerio (1979) 28–30 for readings by Cicero and others which praise Odysseus’ love for his fatherland and the Stoic nature of this reading. Pépin believes that Clement is debunking the Stoic reading of Odysseus as a man immune from the distractions of pleasure rather than the Platonic reading of the soul on its journey to its true home (Pépin (1982) 17).

73 See Zeegers (1972) 278–279 and Daniélou (1973) 94–95 for a discussion of this passage. Marcovich discusses a similar passage at *Protrepticus* 10.92.3 where Clement blends New Testament passages with a line from Aristophanes (Marcovich (1998) 462). See also Lamberton (1986) 56–57 on a Homeric pastiche in Numenius.

Let us flee, o fellow sailors, let us flee that wave; it spews fire, it is an evil island strewn with bones and corpses, and on it sings pleasure, a harlot (πορνίδιον) in her prime, delighting in her vulgar music.

‘Come here, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans, moor your ship, so that you may hear the divine (θειοτέρην)<sup>74</sup> voice.’ (*Od.* 12.184–5)

She praises you, o sailor, and she calls you renowned in song, and the whore (πόρνη) makes the glory of the Greeks (τὸ κύδος τῶν Ἑλλήνων) her own. Leave her to feed on corpses; a heavenly wind (πνεῦμα) helps you. Pass by pleasure, it deceives.

‘Let a loose woman not deceive your mind, coaxing with wheedling words, searching out your barn.’ (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 373–4)

Sail past the song, it works death. If you only want to, once you have conquered death and bound to the wood (ξύλον) you will be released from all destruction, the word (λόγος) of God will steer you, and the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα) will bring you to anchor in the harbours of heaven.

Clement is developing his theme about the morally repulsive nature of pagan religion and the need to see the truth through the metaphor of the false song of the Siren contrasted with the true song of the *logos*, which he introduced at the beginning of the *Protrepticus*. His target elsewhere in the *Protrepticus* has been the mystery cults as well as works of art and stories depicting the deeds of the gods. Now he concentrates on ‘custom’, by which he means the pagan way of life.<sup>75</sup> He weaves into his version the various meanings which have already been attributed to these episodes and adds echoes of the prophets and *Revelation*. In this passage Odysseus’ journey is combined with allusions to the Old and New Testaments. While the sophisticated blend of texts is Clement’s own, the association between the Sirens and the desolation of Babylon goes back to the Septuagint.<sup>76</sup> The dangers of the Sirens are combined

74 Clement writes θειοτέρην instead of the νωϊτέρην of *Od.* 12.185. De Jauregui suggests that this could reflect the promise made by the serpent in Genesis 3:5 to Adam and Eve that they will become ὡς θεοί, like gods (De Jauregui (2008) 262 on *Protr.* 12.118.2).

75 Clement builds here on *Protr.* 10.109.1 where he contrasts custom, which throws one into a pit, to the truth, which leads one to heaven. It is also custom which leads people astray and causes them to worship statues at *Protr.* 10.89.2.

76 Clement’s use of the word βόθρος (‘abyss’) echoes the same word in the Septuagint, for instance, *Ezekiel* 26.20, in the context of the destruction of Babylon. At *Revelation* 9.1, 17.8 and 20.1 the repository of evil is an ἄβυσσος rather than βόθρος, but Clement may well be alluding to it. At *Isaiah* 13.21 and 34.13 and at *Jeremiah* 50.39 the words for jackals (tannîm) and ostriches (or desert owls, benôt ya’ anâh) are rendered into Greek as σειρήνες (Rahner (1963) 357–9). See also Sandnes (2009) 136 and n. 37. Ambrose, writing on *Jeremiah* 50.34 two centuries later, demonstrates that the connection between the biblical Babylon, the

with those of Scylla and Charybdis. The smoke of *Od.* 12.219 recalls the smoke of sacrifices to idols<sup>77</sup> as well as the smoke of Ithaca from chapter 9, discussed above.<sup>78</sup> The 'wave' which 'spews fire' seems to allude to the simile at *Od.* 12.237 which likens Charybdis to a pot boiling on a fire, with a possible allusion to her sending forth the water at *Od.* 12.105.<sup>79</sup> The 'greedy evil' (λίχνον κακόν) seems to evoke Scylla.<sup>80</sup> The whore (πορνίδιον/πόρνη) who is here being assimilated with the lone Siren must allude to the whore of Babylon of *Revelation* 17.<sup>81</sup> The phrase "Leave her to feed on corpses" is reminiscent of *Revelation* 17.6: "And I saw the woman drunk on the blood of the saints and on the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Clement blends the evocative image of the Sirens with one of its Old Testament antecedents and with the many dangerous female figures which threaten Odysseus' homecoming. In addition to the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the sexual temptation of Circe and Calypso is also alluded to in this collage. Clement's description of Odysseus tied to the mast of his ship is part of a tradition which associated the mast with the cross of Christ,<sup>82</sup> and the word ξύλον is used for the cross in the New Testament.<sup>83</sup>

The struggle for the "glory of the Greeks" is about separating the achievements of Greek culture and its iconic stories from "custom" or pagan religion and the way of life which goes with it.<sup>84</sup> At *Od.* 12.184 the Sirens address Odysseus as μέγα χῶδος Ἀχαιῶν, "the great glory of the Greeks". The Siren, like the poet of the *Iliad*, tells heroic stories, but for a wicked purpose. If she

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Sirens and moral ruin was commonplace (*De Fide ad Gratianum* 3.1.4, quoted in Rahner (1963) 367). While Clement contrasts Christian life with pagan religion and custom, Ambrose contrasts the spiritual and secular worlds more generally.

77 *Protr.* 4.51.2.

78 Amerio (1979) 36–37.

79 Philo quotes *Od.* 12.219 in a similar context at *De Somniis* 2.70.

80 See *Od.* 12.118.

81 *Revelation* 17:1, 2 and 5. This image introduces resonances from the Old Testament, as the whore of Babylon of Revelation was inspired by many metaphorical passages which deal with the danger which Canaanite fertility cults and temple prostitution posed to the Israelites: the cities of Nineveh and Tyre, also called whores (*Nahum* 3.4, *Isaiah* 23.15) or Babylon the golden cup (*Jeremiah* 51.13) and Jezebel (1 *Kings* 19). See Caird (1966) 212–213) and see Aune (1998) 935 on the image of the courtesan in literature of this time.

82 E.g., Justin *First Apology* 55. Rahner points out that even pagans associated the mast and yard-arm with the crosses used for crucifixion (Rahner (1963) 372). In the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew* the apostle Andrew is martyred by being tied to a cross by the sea-shore, a scene reminiscent of Odysseus tied to his mast (MacDonald (2004) 259). The λόγος as helmsman evokes Jesus steering the apostle's ship in the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*. See MacDonald (1994) 62.

83 E.g., *Acts* 10.39, *Galatians* 3.13.

84 See Pépin (1982) 11.

“makes the glory of the Greeks her own”, the achievement of Greek culture is being misused. It must instead belong to the Christian message.<sup>85</sup> The song in which Odysseus is renowned is destructive when sung by the Siren but can be the song of the *logos*. This vivid amalgam of the *Odyssey* with the Old and New Testaments shows how all three texts point to the same truth.<sup>86</sup> Other Christian apologists of this period present a simple opposition of pagan religion and myths on the one hand and salvation on the other.<sup>87</sup> Clement’s vision is not of the wholesale rejection of myths and poetry, but of the “glory of the Greeks” itself reaching salvation.

Clement uses this episode again to make an entirely different point. His welcoming attitude towards Greek *paideia* was not shared by all Christians, and he had to defend his approach from those who were hostile to Greek learning. In accordance with the more positive approach to Homer in the *Stromateis*, the Sirens here represent not perdition, but knowledge, which can be useful if it is approached cautiously. In the *Protrepticus* he is concerned with emphasizing the danger of pagan religious practice, while in the *Stromateis* he deals with the wisdom of the Greeks and its place in Christian intellectual life. This time Odysseus is not simply escaping from danger, but rather engaging positively with the song of the Sirens. At *Strom.* 6.2.89.1 Clement warns that in his eagerness to avoid the dangerous song of the Sirens, a Christian should not also pass by useful philosophy.

But it seems that those who subscribe to the name [of Christian], just like the companions of Odysseus, approach the doctrine (λόγος) in an unsophisticated manner, passing by not the Sirens, but the rhythms and the melody, stopping their ears with ignorance because they know they will not be able to find the way home again, once they have opened their ears to Greek wisdom. But he who picks out what is serviceable for the use of catechumens, since most of them are Greeks, “for the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”, should not turn away from the love of wisdom like a dumb animal, but rather gather as many things as possible

85 See Emmett (2001) 216.

86 Another assimilation of this kind between images from the Greek and Judeo-Christian worlds occurs in *Stromateis* 5.10.64.4. In this passage the jars in the house of Zeus at *Il.* 24.527–8 become a parallel image for the Ark of the Covenant, in the same way as the Siren has been assimilated with the whore of Babylon. This passage is discussed in Daniélou (1973) 98–99.

87 E.g., Justin *First Apology* 21–22, Tatian *Oration to the Greeks* 8–10, 21, Theophilus *Ad Autolycum* 2–8, Athenagoras *Legatio*, 20–23. Justin believes that Socrates received some of the *logos* and was right to expel Homer from his state (*Second Apology* 10).

which are useful to those who hear them. Only, we must never linger with these things, but only [stay] for the purpose of [taking] what is useful from them, so that when we have gathered up and taken it we are able to return home to the true philosophy ...

This appears to be a reaction of a cultivated Christian to those teachers who indiscriminately forbid their pupils to read any pagan literature.<sup>88</sup> This positive reading of the Sirens has a parallel in Plutarch's *How to Read Poetry* 15d of about a century earlier, where Plutarch uses the image of Odysseus and the Sirens to argue that it is much better to allow young people to explore literature while providing them with a standard of judgement, the mast, than to stop their ears with wax.<sup>89</sup> Clement transforms this reading with a Christian meaning and encourages Christians to take what is best from the various schools of Greek philosophy,<sup>90</sup> so that they might put together the pieces and arrive at the whole truth.

The dangers faced by Odysseus also provided a metaphor for heresy. At *Stromateis* 7.16.95.1 Clement uses Circe to evoke this danger: "Just as if someone were to become a beast instead of a man, like those who were changed by Circe's drugs, so he has ceased to be a man of God and faithful to the Lord who has spurned the tradition of the Church and has run off towards the opinions of sects of men." The image is versatile: there are Circes lurking not only on the way to faith, but also within the Christian community, and Homeric imagery is not confined to dealing with pagan culture.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4 Jesus and Homer

The story of Eunomus and the cicada with which the *Protrepticus* begins introduces the theme of the true song of the *logos*.<sup>92</sup> At *Protr.* 1.9 Clement enacts

88 See MacDonald (1994) 20 on Christian teachers forbidding followers to read pagan literature. Also see Vermander (1977) 14, Sandnes (2009) 131 and Buffière (1973) 384–346. Clement describes the hostile attitude to Greek philosophy among some Christians at *Strom.* 1.1.18.

89 See MacDonald (1994) 22 and n. 72. Heraclitus also emphasizes this positive aspect of the Sirens: "He listens also to the Sirens, learning from them the varied history of all ages." (*Homeric Problems* 70).

90 See Lilla (1971) 54 and *Strom.* 1.13.57.6.

91 Hippolytus of Rome, a younger contemporary of Clement, identified the Sirens with heresy (Rahner (1963) 363). See MacDonald (1994) 259–260.

92 The 'new song' is identical to the *logos* incarnate in Christ, for instance, at *Protr.* 1.6.1: ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος, ὁ κύριος, καὶ τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν.

the working of this song in a dialogue between Greek culture, represented by Homer, and the *logos* incarnate in Jesus. Clement creates a rhetorical scene where the Gospel is spoken in the words of pagan Greece.<sup>93</sup> He makes Homer a participant in a conversation with the sacred texts and so expresses the idea of the presence of the divine *logos* among pagans.<sup>94</sup> When Clement preaches against the traditional Greek religion, he addresses the poet as its representative, to hold him accountable as theologian for his portrayal of the immoral gods. When, on the other hand, Clement describes the working of the *logos*, Homer can also represent Greek culture in its positive aspect and becomes a participant in conveying the message of the *logos*. At the beginning of his exhortation Clement introduces John the Baptist as the one who prepares for the coming of Christ (*Protr.* 1.9.1). Clement invites his audience to become part of the scene related at *John* 1.19–28, to respond to the Baptist, who urges them to accept the Christian faith, and to question him themselves in the place of the priests:<sup>95</sup>

ἡ γὰρ οὐχὶ καὶ Ἰωάννης ἐπὶ σωτηρίαν παρακαλεῖ καὶ τὸ πᾶν γίνεται φωνὴ προτρεπτική; πυθώμεθα τοίνυν αὐτοῦ· “τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν;” Ἡλίας μὲν οὐκ ἔρεῖ, Χριστὸς δὲ εἶναι ἀρνήσεται· φωνὴ δὲ ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐρήμῳ βοῶσα. τίς οὖν ἔστιν Ἰωάννης; ὡς τύπῳ λαβεῖν, ἐξέστω εἰπεῖν, φωνὴ τοῦ λόγου προτρεπτική ἐν ἐρήμῳ βοῶσα. τί βοᾷς ὦ φωνή; “εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν.” “εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς ὁδοὺς κυρίου.”

Does John not also invite us to salvation and become entirely a voice of exhortation? Let us then ask him. “Who are you of men, and from where?” He will say that he is not Elijah; he will deny that he is Christ; but he will confess, “a voice crying in the desert”. Who is John then? If I can say it in a manner of speaking, the urging voice of the *logos* crying in the desert. What do you cry, o voice? “Tell us also.” “Make straight the ways of the Lord”.

The voice in this passage is the voice of the *logos*. The original question, σὺ τίς εἶ; (“Who are you?”) becomes τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; Telemachus’ question to

93 This passage and what follows has received an extensive discussion from Dawson, who explores it in the light of Clement’s *logos*-theology and his use of allegorical reading similar to the allegorical reading applied to the Old Testament (Dawson (1992) 199–207).

94 In epideictic exercises figures from the past were addressed, and sometimes replied (Emmett (2001) 184). Clement has a similar conversation with Plato at *Protr.* 6.68.1–2. See Zeegers (1971) 269–270 on this use of Homeric quotations.

95 See Dawson (1992) 200 for a detailed discussion of this passage.

Athena at *Od.* 1.170.<sup>96</sup> The audience is invited to pose a question in the words of Homer, and the Baptist replies in the words of Isaiah: φωνή [...] ἐν ἐρήμῳ βοῶσα. The audience again addresses the Baptist in the words of Homer: εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν (*Od.* 1.10),<sup>97</sup> where the poet asks the Muse for inspiration. The Baptist is here identified with the voice of the *logos*, and so the Greeks, in the words of Homer himself, are asking the *logos* for its message.<sup>98</sup> The Baptist replies, εὐθείας ποι-εῖτε τὰς ὁδοὺς κυρίου, a blend of the wording of *John* 1.23 and *Isaiah* 40.3, which shows again how the prophet and the evangelist are both inspired by the *logos*.

The *logos* which prepared the Jews for the incarnation through the law is doing the same for the Greeks through their philosophy.<sup>99</sup> Homer represents the education which produced the philosophy which prepared the Greeks for Christ. Clement demonstrates, by fitting Homeric phrases into the dialogue, that the pagan poet can hint at the truth and, when confronted with an exhortation to faith, can ask the right questions.

As part of the climactic ending to his work, Clement shows Jesus himself calling the audience to accept the message, and it is he who speaks in the words of Homer at *Protr.* 12.120.2:<sup>100</sup>

This eternal Jesus, the one great high priest of the one God who is also the father, prays for men and calls to men,  
κέκλυτε, μυρία φύλα (*Il.* 17.220)  
“Hear, you tribes without number ...”

The use of Homer's words in these two passages from the beginning and end of his exhortation which deal respectively with the preparation for the *logos* and its final appeal to the Greeks underlines the importance of Homer in this message from a Greek Christian to an audience steeped in Greek pagan culture. Clement achieves a subtle rhetorical effect with his symbolic representation of the Christian message reaching the Greek world. The *Protrepticus* demonstrates at length that the Christian life is superior to the pagan one, and the

96 The phrase τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; (*Od.* 1.170 etc.) is used to introduce an incongruously Homeric tone for comic effect in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (Farrell (2004) 265). In a similarly light-hearted vein Justin inserts *Il.* 6.123 (τίς δὲ σύ ἐσσι, φέριστε, καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων; “Who are you, my friend, among mortal men?”) into a conversation in the *Dialogue with Trypho* 1.3. Maximus of Tyre uses the words of Odysseus to question the gods at *Oration* 9.1.

97 Also cited in Ps.-Plutarch 86 (see Zeegers (1972) 266).

98 Emmett (2001) 184.

99 See, for instance, *Strom.* 1.5.28.3.

100 See Zeegers (1971) 271 on this quotation and 282–285 on Clement's use of classical quotations to convey a Christian message.

work ends with Jesus, the incarnation of the *logos*, urging people to leave behind their old ways, exemplified here by the Bacchic worship in Euripides' *Bacchae*, and to follow him, and he does this in the words of Homer. The language of Homer now serves the gospel; Homer, on behalf of the Greeks, has become a witness to Jesus and his words have come to serve the gospel through the agency of the *logos*.

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## Origen and Celsus on the Allegorical Reading of Homer and Moses

*Ronald E. Heine*

This essay examines the argument of Origen against Celsus concerning the allegorical reading of the stories of Homer and Moses, especially those stories in Genesis. I begin by surveying the vocabulary that was used for allegorical reading by Origen and Celsus; then I look at a particular argument that was used to give value to the two sets of stories. Finally, I examine the similarities and differences between Celsus' allegorical reading of Homer and Origen's allegorical reading of Moses.

Origen's attitude to Homer is rather mysterious. He was a prolific writer. There are more of Origen's writings extant than of any other Christian before the fourth century. He had been raised and educated in Alexandria, the center of Homeric studies in the Hellenistic world. His education, as that of all Greek boys, would have been based on Homer's poems. He appears to have earned his living as a *grammaticos* for some years. This profession would have necessitated his regular use of Homer's texts in his teaching. There is, however, only one of his many works in which he mentions Homer's name or cites any verses from him. This is the *Contra Celsum*, usually considered his last work, and certainly the last of those that have survived. Even in this treatise consisting of eight books there are few citations of Homer and some of these appear in quotations from his opponent Celsus.<sup>1</sup> Celsus was a second century CE philosopher who had written an attack on Christianity. His work has perished except for what has been preserved in quotations in Origen's treatise against him.

Origen was well acquainted with the methods of the literary scholars at the Museum in Alexandria who were especially famous for their work on the Homeric texts. He used the methods and markings they had developed in producing his text of the Greek Old Testament called the *Hexapla* and in his exegetical works on the Bible.<sup>2</sup> One of his most prevalent exegetical strategies was to compare "spiritual things with spiritual" and interpret passages on the basis of "the common usage of the Scriptures" (*Cels* 7.11). He expresses the

<sup>1</sup> Villani (2012) 120 counts 46, 11 of which are in quotations from Celsus.

<sup>2</sup> Heine (2010) 22–24; 73–76.

methodology in Pauline language (1 Corinthians 2:13), but it is obviously a Christian adaptation of the principle attributed to Aristarchus of interpreting Homer by Homer.<sup>3</sup>

Origen sometimes introduces verses and phrases from Homer into his argument in places where Celsus, so far as can be determined from what Origen has preserved, had not referred to Homer. He quotes a statement about Athena from *Iliad* 2.547–8 in response to a statement by Celsus who appears only to have mentioned her name (*Cels.* 8.66). He drops a paraphrase of a Homeric tag into a description of the Christian God without mentioning that the words come from Homer (*Cels.* 8.53); he cites lines from Homer to further or sometimes define his argument (*Cels.* 2.61; 2.75–6; 3.22; 3.28–9; 7.6); and he uses Homeric lines as pure adornment for his argument (*Cels.* 1.31). He retorted to Celsus' argument that birds of divination showed that irrational animals are more divine than humans by citing three stories from Homer. First, he refers to Homer's story of the sparrow's brood being eaten by a snake (*Il.* 2.308–19); second, he quotes the story of the eagle being bitten while carrying a writhing serpent (*Il.* 12.200–209); finally, he refers to Apollo using a hawk for a messenger and quotes the partial verse from Homer: "a hawk, the swift messenger of Apollo" (*Od.* 15.526). Chadwick refers to the two longer passages as "stock instances in the debates about divination".<sup>4</sup> The verse about the hawk, however, appears to be Origen's own contribution (*Cels.* 4.91).

Origen once mixes sayings from different passages of Homer in his argument against Celsus. The Homeric setting introducing the quotation is in *Odyssey* 20.105–117 where Zeus thunders in answer to Odysseus' prayer, and a servant-woman hears it and utters what Homer labels an "omen" wishing that the suitors' feast that day be their last in Odysseus' halls. The exact words of the quotation Origen gives, however, are in *Odyssey* 4.685 where it is Penelope who says of the suitors, "May they now eat their last and final feast here". The two sayings are similar, but the exact wording is from *Odyssey* 4 (*Cels.* 4.94). It is the kind of confusion someone who had memorized the stories might easily introduce.

Origen was aware of Homer's skills as a writer and admired them. He notes that many praise him, and he implies that he does himself, for keeping the various people in his poems consistent throughout and not attributing actions or words to them that would be out of character (*Cels.* 7.36).<sup>5</sup> He was, of course, hostile to the stories about the immoralities of the Greek gods (*Cels.* 1.25; 4.48).

3 Heine (1997) 135–139.

4 Chadwick (1965) 256, n. 2; 257, n. 1.

5 Cf., however, Villani (2012) 120.

It is interesting, however, that he blames Orpheus primarily for the creation of the myths about the passions of the gods (*Cels.* 1.17) and, alluding to Plato's critique, says that Orpheus' poems more than Homer's deserve banishment (*Cels.* 7.54). The direct statement of his agreeing with Plato's banishment of Homer from his republic has been regarded by modern editors as a marginal gloss that got incorporated into the text and should, therefore, be disregarded in evaluating Origen's views on Homer (*Cels.* 4.36).

Origen argues against Homer's view (*Il.* 9.319–20) that good and bad share a common fate (*Cels.* 3.69). The fact that he argues at all with a view of Homer shows some respect for him. Villani makes a similar argument regarding the fact that Origen discusses the meaning of a Homeric verse (*Cels.* 8.68).<sup>6</sup>

One must conclude that Origen did not, overall at least, have a negative opinion of Homer. He certainly was aware of the extensive influence of the Homeric stories on the formation of Greco-Roman culture and thought. This essay will not attempt to solve the mystery of the paucity of references to Homer in Origen's works. It should be noted in passing, however, that outside the *Contra Celsum*, Origen mentions the names of very few earlier writers. Quotations, except for those from Scripture, and the names of people, except for those appearing in Scripture, are very rare in his other works.

## 1 The Vocabulary of Allegorical Reading in the Time of Origen

Allegorical reading had been practiced for several centuries by the time of Origen (3rd century CE). Plato had said (4th century BCE) that Homer's stories about strife between the gods must be banned from his ideal city, whether they were to be read allegorically or not (*Republic* 2.378d). That implies that the allegorical reading of Homeric and other myths was already a well-known practice. The word Plato uses that is commonly rendered allegory is *hyponoia*. It means something like an "under meaning". The actual words of the author had, as it were, a "sub-meaning" which was the true intention of what he said. This was the standard word used for figurative readings of texts in the classical period.

Plutarch tells us that by his time (c. 50–120 CE) *hyponoia* had been replaced by the term *allēgoria* ("allegory").<sup>7</sup> Heraclitus, probably a contemporary of Plutarch, provides an etymological definition of *allēgoria* by separating out from the verb form the pronoun *alla* ("other") and the verb *agoreuein* ("to

<sup>6</sup> Villani (2012) 121.

<sup>7</sup> Pépin (1976) 87–88; Brisson (2004) 58.

say”) and asserting that it signifies to say one thing but mean another (*Homeric Problems* 5).<sup>8</sup> Quintilian, also writing in the first century CE, referred to *allēgoria* as a continuous metaphor (Quintillian 9.2.46).<sup>9</sup> The displacement that Plutarch mentions was not, of course, a total displacement. Philo Judaeus, also writing in the first century CE, uses *hyponoia* more frequently than *allēgoria* to refer to figurative meaning in texts.<sup>10</sup> *Ainittesthai* (“to hint at,” “to speak in riddles”) was probably the most frequently used verb to refer to allegorical interpretation from the classical through the Hellenistic period of Greek culture.<sup>11</sup> It was used by pagans, Jews, and Christians to refer to hidden meanings in texts.

## 2 Celsus’ Vocabulary of Allegorical Reading<sup>12</sup>

Little can be said with certainty about Celsus’ vocabulary of allegorical reading because we have his statements only as Origen has preserved them, and there are so few places where the vocabulary occurs. Nevertheless, assuming that Origen’s references accurately preserve the words Celsus used when he spoke on the subject we can see a pattern. Celsus appears to have used only the words *ainittesthai* (*Cels.* 4.21; 5.52; 6.22, 42 (twice)), *allēgoria* (*Cels.* 1.20, 27, 29; 4. 48, 49, 50, 51), and *allēgorein* (*Cels.* 4.38, 48, 50) to express a figurative reading of a text.

The term *hyponoia* does not appear in any of Origen’s quotations of Celsus. There are two passages where Origen comments on Celsus’ words and uses the term *hyponoia* in relation to Celsus’ statements. In one, Celsus refers to the Cretans’ claim that the tomb of Zeus is on Crete. He does not mention an allegorical reading in the words Origen quotes. In his response Origen says that Celsus “hints” (*ainittesthai*) that there are “figurative underlying meanings” (*tropikas hyponoias*) in the story (*Cels.* 3.43). Had Celsus used these specific words or are they Origen’s way of restating Celsus’ view? Unfortunately, we cannot know. The same ambiguity is present in the other passage, where Celsus accuses Jews and Christians of resorting to allegory (*allēgoria*) because they are ashamed of the stories of Moses. Origen responds that it is the Greek myths that are shameful, whether “composed with an underlying meaning (*hyponoias*) or otherwise” (*Cels.* 4.48).

8 Russell and Konstan (2005) 8, 9.

9 Pépin (1976) 89.

10 Borgen, Fuglseth, and Skarsten (2000) 18, 347.

11 See Nünlist (2009) 225–237 for the uses of this verb. His study is primarily about its use by the scholiasts.

12 The references to passages are drawn from *TLG* searches.



There is also a slight ambiguity regarding whether Celsus used the term *tropologeîn* ("to interpret figuratively"). The situation is the same as with *hyponoia* discussed above. Origen uses it twice in reference to what Celsus had said. In the first he complains that Celsus faults those who interpret Moses' stories "in a figurative and allegorical manner" (*tropologountas kai allēgorountas*). In the second, he uses the same pair of words and asserts that the creators of myths that Celsus had highlighted wrote "their philosophy" only for the elite who could interpret their myths "in a figurative and allegorical manner" (*Cels.* 1.17, 18). Again, it is not possible to say with certainty that Celsus did or did not use *tropologeîn* to refer to figurative reading. But, given the fact that *tropologeîn* was a word Origen frequently used of such readings, as will be shown below, and the fact that it is not attested in any of the actual quotations from Celsus, the probability is that Origen introduced the word and Celsus did not use it. The same conclusion should be drawn regarding *hyponoia* discussed above, and for the same reasons. Celsus, in all probability, used only the words *ainittesthai*, *allēgoria*, and *allēgoreîn* to refer to the hidden meanings in myths.<sup>13</sup>

### 3 Origen's Vocabulary of Allegorical Reading

Origen's vocabulary for the figurative reading of texts, however, is more extensive. He uses the noun *allēgoria* ten times in the eight books of the *Contra Celsum* in addition to the uses by Celsus, and the verb *allēgoreîn* thirteen times in addition to the three uses by Celsus. This is in contrast to only nine uses of this noun in the combined preserved books of his *Commentary on John* and *Commentary on Matthew*, which total seventeen books between them. In these same two commentaries the verb *allēgoreîn* appears the same number of times it does in the eight books of the *Contra Celsum*. These numbers suggests that this particular vocabulary was more important to Origen when he was arguing against the pagan Celsus and discussing Greek myths than when he was explaining Biblical texts for Christians.

Origen uses *hyponoia* more often than *allēgoria* in the *Contra Celsum* and in the commentaries on John and Matthew. The verb *ainittesthai* is generously scattered throughout his writings introducing hidden meanings in texts.

13 Fédou (1988) 137–138 has overlooked Celsus' use of *ainittesthai* when he says that he uses only the noun *allēgoria* and the verb *allēgoreîn*. His statement that Origen uses these terms generally only to evoke the pagan exegesis or to summarize the objections of Celsus accurately reflects the paucity of the appearance of these words in Origen's other works, which I note below.

Origen's favorite terms for referring to a non-literal reading of a text, however, are *tropologeîn* ("to interpret figuratively"), and its cognate noun *tropologia* ("figurative expression"). This word is especially interesting because it is not attested in Greek literature until the late second century BCE when it appears once in the Hellenistic Jewish writing, *The Letter of Aristeas*. Its next appearance chronologically is in the writings of Origen. It may have been used by the second century CE Pythagorean, Numenius of Apamea. Origen, at least, uses the verb of Numenius' exposition of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus (*Cels* 4.51). One other word has special importance in Origen's vocabulary of allegorical reading, the noun *anagōgē* ("a lifting up" or "anagogical sense"). The word is especially important in his exegetical writings. It appears only twice in the *Contra Celsum* (4.21, 45) and each time Origen is criticizing Celsus for not seeking the anagogical sense of the writings of Moses.<sup>14</sup>

All of the words discussed above are used by Origen in his discussions of the writings of Moses and Homer in the *Contra Celsum*. Modern scholars often do not distinguish between the varied terminology in translating Origen.<sup>15</sup> In his translation of the *Contra Celsum*, for example, Chadwick tends to render them indiscriminately as to give an "allegorical" meaning.<sup>16</sup> I prefer, however, to try, in most instances at least, to differentiate between them, suspecting that there may have been nuances in Origen's choice of words that are lost if they are rendered synonymously.

The term *boulēma*, "intention" was also an important term in the allegorical reading of Origen and Celsus. It was used to refer to the intention of the original author lying under the "letter" of what he had written. It was an important term among both ancient rhetoricians and grammarians.<sup>17</sup> It appears in both Celsus and Origen, as will be seen in the final section below. Neuschäfer calls the term a "central hermeneutical concept" running through the entirety of Origen's work.<sup>18</sup>

The meaning of the phrase "literal" or "historical sense" must also be discussed in this section on vocabulary connected with Origen's and Celsus' allegorical reading for this sense played an important part in the argument between the two on the reading of Moses and Homer. An allegorical reading

14 I have not included *theōria* ("contemplation") in this discussion. Origen uses the word, but it is not a regular word he uses for Biblical interpretation. It became especially important in this usage in the 4th century CE. See Heine (1984) 368.

15 See, for example, Pépin (1976) 90, who says that in the final analysis, image, metaphor, allegory, and enigma have very little difference in meaning.

16 Chadwick (1965).

17 See Eden (1997) 2–23.

18 Neuschäfer (1987) 320, n. 43.

always involves a text that has a literal meaning. As Dawson has pointed out, allegory can be understood “only in relation to its necessary ‘other,’ traditionally called the ‘literal sense’ or ‘literal meaning.’”<sup>19</sup> The more frequent ways of referring to the literal sense were by prepositional phrases using the words *rhêton* (“word”), *lexis* (“text”), or *gramma* (“letter”). Modern readers sometimes confuse the literal sense with history. Referring to the reading of a text as a literal reading did not mean that that way of reading the text conveys history in any sense. Dawson defines the literal meaning as “the ‘normal,’ ‘common-sensical’ meaning.”<sup>20</sup>

The text itself might be referred to as *historia* (story) or *mythos* (myth). *Historia* was a neutral word implying neither the truth nor the falsity of what it related. It is probably best thought of simply as “story”. To refer to the actuality of something related as *historia* it was designated as “having taken place” (*gignesthai*) or as being “true” (*alêthês*). *Mythos* (“myth”) was another term designating a text in the discussion between Celsus and Origen. In Homer’s own writings this word could mean either a true or false story. In Origen’s and Celsus’ use of the term in the *Contra Celsum*, it always means a fictitious story. If the author wished to *emphasize* that a text was fiction, the word *plasma* was used which meant a “fictitious” or “made-up story”. Celsus, Origen asserts, will say that the stories about Jesus “are fictions (*plasmata*) and differ in no way from myths (*mythôn*)” (*Cels.* 6.77). Guinot points out that Origen never uses the terms *mythos* or *plasma* of the Scriptures. He reserves these terms for the myths of Homer and Plato. He introduces texts from Scripture with such phrases as “the Scriptures”, “the writings of Moses”, “the writings about the serpent”, etc. The application of *mythos* to Scripture is made only by Celsus in the *Contra Celsum*.<sup>21</sup>

Origen’s discussion of the Trojan war in the first book of the *Contra Celsum* provides a good example of his understanding of these terms. “Before beginning the defense”, he says, “I must state that it is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to establish with certainty that almost any story (*historia*), even if it is true (*alêthês*), took place (*gegenêmenên*)” (*Cels.* 1.42). As an example, he proposes that someone may claim that the Trojan war did not “take place” (*gegonenai*)<sup>22</sup> because Homer has woven fictions (*paruphantentos plasmatos*) about the gods into the text. Origen does not accept this negative view but shares the “common opinion” that the war “really took place” (*alêthôs*

19 Dawson (1992) 7.

20 Dawson (1992) 8.

21 Guinot (2009), 180–181.

22 Dio Chrysostom (*Discourse* 11) had made such an argument. See Grant (1957) 102.

*gegonenai*). He believes, however, like Strabo, that Homer took something that really happened and adorned it with mythological stories about the gods.<sup>23</sup> He concludes his discussion by saying that the reader of these stories (*historiais*) must, with an “open mind”, discern “what to agree with and what to interpret figuratively” (*tropologēsei*) by investigating the “intention (*boulēma*) of those who invented such tales” (*Cels.* 1.42).

It should be noted that Origen does not speak of Homer’s mingling of fact and fiction in a condemnatory manner in this passage. In fact, he held a similar view about the composition of Scripture. He does not refer to this in the *Contra Celsum*, but in his much earlier treatise, *De Principiis*. There in discussing how Scripture should be interpreted, he asserts that the first concern of the *Logos* who was the author of Scripture was to communicate the sequence of spiritual events, some of which had already happened and some which were yet to occur. To do this, the *Logos* used “events that had happened in history” (*genomena kata tēn historian*) whenever they corresponded properly with spiritual events. But where there were no such correspondences, Scripture has “woven in together (*sunuphēnen*)”<sup>24</sup> with the story (*historia*) what did not happen (*to mē genomenon*), sometimes what could not even happen (*mēde dunaton genesthai*), and sometimes what could happen but, in fact, did not” (*dunaton men genesthai, ou mēn gegenēmenon*) (*De Principiis* 4.2.9). Origen’s statement above about the reader exercising diligence and caution in sorting out what should be understood as factual history and what should be understood otherwise in relation to the Trojan war applied equally, in his view, to the reader of Scripture.

#### 4 The Antiquity of the Writings of Homer and Moses

Homer and Moses represent two sets of authoritative texts in the first centuries of the Christian era. Niehoff has called them “foundational texts” for their respective communities of readers.<sup>25</sup> They were antithetical to one another in some important ways, the most obvious being that one assumes that there are many gods and the other that there is only one. For both the Greek and Jewish communities the writings of Homer or those of Moses were educational,

23 Strabo, *Geography* 1.2.9, 11, 20. Grant (1957) 102.

24 This word has the same verbal root as that used in *Cels.* 1.42 above where Origen refers to Homer “weaving fictions into the text.”

25 Niehoff (2011) 3.

as well as religious texts.<sup>26</sup> In both cases the particular canon defined what it meant to belong to one or the other of these ethnic communities. While Christians regarded the writings of Moses differently than the Jewish community, his writings were, nevertheless, a very important part of their religious literature.

In his argument against Celsus, the Mosaic texts were sometimes more important to Origen than the Gospel texts. The Gospels were relatively recent documents in terms of the criterion of antiquity. The Mosaic texts were ancient, even more ancient, Origen argues, than those of Homer (*Cels.* 4.21; 6.7; 6.43). The antiquity of texts gave them authority in the ancient world. Plato refers to the words of the Egyptian priest who asserted that the Greeks were children because they had no truly ancient traditions (*Timaeus* 22 B). Most Greeks accepted the Homeric poems as their oldest poetry.<sup>27</sup> Both Jewish and Christian apologists appealed to the antiquity of the Mosaic texts in their arguments with pagan Greco-Romans.<sup>28</sup> The third century Christian Ps. Justin claimed that Homer had visited Egypt where he had become familiar with the writings of Moses and had incorporated material from him into his poems (*Cohortatio* 28; 30).<sup>29</sup>

Looking to ancient texts as authoritative guides to contemporary life carried an inherent difficulty. The culture of Homer and Moses differed radically from that of the pagans, Jews, and Christians of the early Christian era. Clark refers to this as “the gap between the reader’s present and ‘a disappearing past.’”<sup>30</sup> The ancient texts had to be interpreted and applied in some way to the contemporary culture if they were to continue to be meaningful. One of the most prevalent ways of doing this was to search for a relevant hidden meaning in the text that could be disclosed by an allegorical reading.

It was usually assumed, though not always, that the author of the text had been aware of the meaning that lay tucked below the surface of his words and that this had been his *intended* meaning. This meant that the allegorist exegete was bringing out the authorial intention in his interpretation. “It is clear,” Origen said, “that Moses saw in his mind the truth of the Law and the allegorical meanings related to the anagogical sense (*tas kata anagōgēn allēgorias*) of the

26 See Brisson (2004) 6–7; On the continued emphasis on the religious aspect of the texts of Homer used in education well beyond the time of Origen see Watts (2006) 19–23.

27 Blank (1998), 41–42.

28 Droge (1989) 1–11.

29 Sandnes (2009) 95–96.

30 Clark (1999) 77.

stories he recorded" (Origen, *Commentary on John* 6.22),<sup>31</sup> and that "Moses ... expresses the double nature of his language with extreme caution" (*Cels.* 7.54). This understanding is more implicit than explicit in Celsus' treatment of Homer. Commenting on Homer's references to Zeus throwing Hephaestus from heaven (*Il.* 1.590–1) and hanging Hera in space by her ankles (*Il.* 15.18–24) Origen says that Celsus asserted that Heraclitus and Pherecydes had spoken of a war among the gods and that Homer is "hinting at" (*ainissomenou*) the same in these two stories. Celsus then proceeds, Origen says, to explain these words in relation to the creation of the material order by saying that in Zeus' words to Hera in the latter passage, Homer is "hinting at" (*ainittesthai*) "God's words to matter" (*Cels.* 6.42). While not explicit, it seems rather clear that Celsus thinks that Homer knew the hidden meaning in his stories. We know clearly that Heraclitus in his *Homeric Problems* (probably early 2nd century CE) believed that Homer was aware of a philosophic meaning in his story of the hurling of Hephaestus from heaven.<sup>32</sup>

I will examine three passages in the *Contra Celsus* where the question of priority in time plays an important role. In relation to the Homeric passages mentioned in the preceding paragraph, Celsus had asserted that the Christian misunderstanding of these passages, particularly those in Heraclitus and Pherecydes about a mythological war between the gods, lay at the basis of the Christian doctrine of the devil as an opponent to God.<sup>33</sup> This view assumes, of course, the priority of the Greek myths. Origen's reply involves, in part, the setting up of the chronology of the documents involved. First, he says, Homer preceded Heraclitus and Pherecydes, but the writings of Moses were even earlier than Homer's. And furthermore, he continues, the Christian doctrine of the devil has its origin in Moses' writings. He proceeds then to locate stories he asserts lay at the basis of the Christian teaching in Moses' books of Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus (*Cels.* 6.43). In this passage Origen does not take the further step of arguing that Homer got his idea from Moses. He is content to show that Christians were not dependent on the Greek stories as Celsus had claimed. In the next two examples we will see that Origen pushes his argument on to this next step.

Celsus had argued that Christians got their ideas about the future life from Greek stories, especially Homer's words about the "Elysian fields" (*Od.* 4.563–5)

31 Heine (trans.) (1989) 174.

32 See Porter (1992) 95–96.

33 Pépin (1976) 449–452, contains an extensive discussion of Celsus' objection to the Christian doctrine of the devil based on this passage.

and Plato's remarks about the immortal soul going to a "pure land" (*gēn katharan*) (*Phaedo* 109 A, B). Origen's retort is that Moses had taught that God had promised a "pure land" (*hagian gēn*), "good and abundant, flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3.8). The statement in Exodus is the promise God made of the land of Canaan to the Israelites fleeing Egypt. Origen, however, reads the story much like the author of Hebrews in the New Testament had read it. There it is argued that the promise made was about a final "rest" and this was not realized by the Israelites but still stands open (Hebrews 3:7–4:11; 12:22). Origen argues that the promised "pure" and "good land" could not be about the land of Canaan because that land was a part of this earth that had been cursed (Genesis 3:17). It must, therefore, be about the future hope of those who die. The Christian doctrine of the future life, therefore, comes from Moses, not Homer or Plato. Moses preceded even the Greek alphabet (*Cels.* 7.28), he asserts. The Greeks, being later than Moses, got their views from a misunderstanding of the things he had hinted at (*tinōn ainissomenōn*) or by modifying what he had written (*Cels.* 7.30). The antiquity of Moses' writings is the anchor of Origen's argument.

In *Contra Celsum* 4.21 Origen mentions Celsus' claim that in his story about the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) Moses had simply retold a garbled version of Homer's story about the Aloeadae (*Od.* 11.305–320; cf. *Il.* 5.385–387). The latter had wanted to scale heaven by piling three mountains on one another, but the son of Zeus and Leto had killed them. Celsus had claimed that Moses' story "clearly" contained no deeper meaning (*mēden ainissētai*). Earlier Jewish exegetes in Alexandria had noticed the similarity between the themes in Moses' story and that of Homer. These exegetes treated the story in both authors as portraying *hybris*. They regarded those attempting to reach heaven in both stories as ignorant of scientific knowledge. They believed neither Moses nor Homer shared this ignorance, and that Moses even adapted Homer's story to the more reasonable possibility of constructing a tower.<sup>34</sup> Origen's whole argument against Celsus' assertion is the argument of antiquity. He argues as follows. First, no one told the story of the Aloeadae before Homer. He, therefore, must be the source of that story. Second, Moses' story about the tower, however, significantly antedates Homer, and even the Greek alphabet. In his conclusion, Origen tacitly assumes a relationship between the two stories, for he concludes by asking which of the two authors was more likely, given what he has just pointed out about antiquity, to be corrupting the story of the other.

34 Niehoff (2011) 81; Droge (1989) 160.

He answers by saying that “an impartial hearer” will conclude that “Moses is more ancient than Homer”.

In the immediately following paragraph (*Cels.* 4.21) Origen says that Celsus compared the Mosaic story about Sodom and Gomorrah with that of Phaethon. The latter story is not told by Homer but is first told by Euripides.<sup>35</sup> Origen, nevertheless, in his argument introduces again the comparison of the antiquity of Moses in relation to Homer. Those who tell the story of Phaethon, he says, “were more recent than Homer, and Homer was much more recent than Moses.” Origen saw Homer to be the measuring stick for Greek literary antiquity. Other Greek authors are set up against Homer, who is always pronounced more ancient than they, and then Moses is stated to have been more ancient than Homer.<sup>36</sup> The only literary Greek thing that Origen speaks of as preceding Homer is the alphabet, and Moses, he asserts, precedes even this (*Cels.* 4.21; 7.28). Origen used the antiquity of Moses somewhat like a trump card. It could substantiate a conclusion without need for further argument.

## 5 The Application of Allegorical Reading to the Writings of Homer and Moses

The topic of this section involves the literal understanding of the texts of Homer and Moses as well as the allegorical reading of them. As noted in the first section above, there can be no allegorical reading without a text with some kind of literal meaning. In replying to Celsus’ treatment of Moses’ tower of Babel story, Origen says that “the person who is capable ... will explain ... both the matters that pertain to the literal story in the passage (*ta tēs kata ton topon historias*), what teaching it might contain, and the matters that pertain to its anagogical meaning (*ta tēs peri autou anagōgēs*)” (*Cels.* 4.21). All texts, including myths, have a literal meaning. There were, however, certain assumptions about what could and what could not be given an allegorical reading.

Origen’s argument with Celsus is not about the legitimacy of reading a text allegorically. Both accepted that. What Origen disagrees with Celsus about is what stories can legitimately be interpreted by allegorical reading. Origen was aware of allegorical readings of Homer’s poems (*Cels.* 7.6; cf. 8.66–7) and may

35 Chadwick (1965) 198, n. 3.

36 He may have considered the poetry of Linus, Musaeus, and Orpheus (*Cels.* 1.18) to have been earlier than Homer, but it was no longer extant. Homer’s poetry was considered the most ancient surviving poetry (Blank (1998) 40–41).



have allowed that Homer's works possessed some hidden meanings.<sup>37</sup> Celsus, however, had denied that the stories of Moses contained any deeper meaning (*Cels.* 4.21). Moses had composed empty myths containing nothing important, he asserted (*Cels.* 1.20; 3.74). They are "incredible and tasteless" (*Cels.* 4.36), "not susceptible to allegorical interpretation" (*Cels.* 4.49, 50), "unintelligible", "without any secret significance" (*Cels.* 4.55), and "totally simple and vulgar" (*Cels.* 4.87). Moses' cosmogony, furthermore, is "quite foolish" (*Cels.* 6.49), even "trash" (*Cels.* 6.50). To assign days to creation and say that God worked with his hands is "absurd" (*Cels.* 6.60, 61). Celsus recognizes that some Jews and Christians, whom he calls "the more capable", did allegorize the Biblical stories but, he asserts that they did so because they were ashamed of them (*Cels.* 4.48).

This attack of Celsus on the value of the literal meaning of Moses' stories is the most serious charge that Origen must answer. He draws on several resources to do so, including Homer and the Greek myths, and Plato's well-known critique of the Homeric myths. Origen wants to show that the literal meanings of the Mosaic stories, in addition to containing hidden meanings, can be meaningful and helpful in themselves, in contrast to many of the Homeric myths.<sup>38</sup>

Plato had cited the Homeric stories of Zeus binding Hera and throwing Hephaestus from heaven as examples of the kinds of stories in Homer that were to be banned from his ideal city whether they were to be read allegorically or not. The reason he gives is that the young cannot distinguish what is to be taken allegorically and what is not (*Republic* 2. 378 D). Plato's concern is that the impressions made on the young by such stories would remain indelibly with them throughout life. This is a concern about the *literal meaning* of the Homeric myths, even though they might convey an allegorical meaning for people capable of so interpreting them. This view lies at the heart of some of Origen's most pointed arguments against what Celsus had said about the stories in both Moses and Homer.

In reply to Celsus' charge that the more capable Christians turn to allegory because they are ashamed of the literal meaning of their stories, Origen replies that it is the myths of the Greeks that are shameful in their literal sense. This is so, he asserts, nearly quoting Plato, "whether they have been composed with an underlying meaning or otherwise (*eite di' huponoias gegrammenōn eite allōs hopōsoun*)" (*Cels.* 4.48). "We do not accept," he adds, "even for the purpose of figurative interpretation (*tropologias*), any myth that would be harmful for the young" (*Cels.* 4.48; cf. 1.18). Origen argues that the Greek poets composed their

37 See Villani (2012) 121–122 on *Cels.* 8.68.

38 Guinot (2009) 181.

myths only for that elite group who would be able to interpret them allegorically. They took no thought, he says, for the people who would understand them literally (*Cels.* 4.50). Moses, on the contrary, he says, gave attention to both meanings. He did not write anything that would be harmful morally for the Jewish multitudes that would read his work at the literal level. On the other hand, he wrote in such a way that those capable could search out his intention (*boulēma*) by deeper study of his writings (*Cels.* 1.18; 4.49; 6.1–2; 7.10). This was Origen's general view of the Mosaic writings long before he was aware of Celsus' treatise against the Christians. In his early *De Principiis*, when he was setting out a hermeneutic for reading Scripture, he spoke of two goals of the Spirit in its composition. One was to hide the mysteries of God's dealings with humanity beneath Scripture's stories and laws for those who were more intelligent and could search out the hidden meanings. The other was to make the stories and laws themselves such that the multitudes who would read them only at the literal level would be improved by them (*De Principiis* 4.2.7–9).

Origen and Celsus seem to have had similar, if not identical, criteria for the legitimacy of an allegorical reading. They both assumed that there must be a connection between the literal meaning and the allegorical. Celsus asserted that the attempts of Jews and Christians to allegorize the stories of Moses were failures because Moses' stories were "outright silly myths". Origen reverses the charge on Celsus and says that it is rather the Greek myths that are extremely silly and even sacrilegious (*Cels.* 4.50).

In *Contra Celsum* 4.37–50 Origen gives a summary presentation of Celsus' attack on the stories in Genesis beginning with the creation and extending through the Joseph stories at the end. In his responses, we can detect some of the criteria Origen seems to have recognized that would justify an allegorical reading. He seems to have thought that for a literal reading to be allegorized, there must be something of worth in the literal story. This worth might come from different sources. The actuality of a story might provide a basis. "Often," he says, "the *Logos* used stories which had occurred (*historiais genomenais*) to make greater things known in an underlying meaning (*en hyponoia*)."<sup>1</sup> As an example, he cites the references to wells in Genesis and implies that he has seen some of them himself (*Cels.* 4.44). An example of a preceding allegorical interpretation, especially if it came from a recognized authority, might also provide the necessary worth for a story to be allegorized. The stories in Genesis about righteous men having concubines as well as wives can be allegorized on the example of the allegorical treatment of one such story by an earlier "wise man". Galatians 4:22–26 is cited as the example. The physical acts are not to be imitated, but rather their spiritual meaning.

The story of Lot and his daughters, however, caused Origen difficulty (Genesis 19:30–38). Celsus, of course, had noticed it. Origen says Celsus examined neither the literal meaning nor the anagogical, but simply pronounced the story “more impious than the Thyestian evils”. Origen says the passage has a figurative meaning (*tropologias*), but he does not give it in the *Contra Celsum*. He had provided such an interpretation in an earlier homily on Genesis.<sup>39</sup> Before he offered the figurative reading in the homily, however, he tried diligently to set the literal meaning of Lot’s daughters’ actions in the best possible light by suggesting that they thought they were saving civilization.<sup>40</sup> In the *Contra Celsum* he attempts to soften the literal meaning by putting their actions in the context of the Stoic doctrine that actions may be good, bad, or indifferent (*Cels.* 4.45). These efforts on behalf of the literal meaning of the story of Lot’s daughters were demanded if Origen was to show the worth in the story that would justify reading it figuratively. Celsus had also pronounced the Joseph stories at the end of Genesis absurd. Origen argues that he fails to see anything in these stories at the literal level that can legitimately be labeled absurd. To the contrary, he says, there is much in the stories that is “attractive” (*Cels.* 4.47). Just prior to this Origen had introduced a story from Homer into his argument (*Cels.* 4.46). He says that if Celsus had mentioned the story of Joseph’s self-control when Potiphar’s wife had tried to seduce him, it could have been shown how superior the Joseph story was to that of Bellerophon related in the *Iliad* (6.155–95). This is, of course, an example of the rhetorical practice called *praeteritio*, of mentioning what you claim to omit. He has, in other words, made the comparison with the Homeric story himself, which Celsus had failed to do.

Against Celsus, Origen casts doubt on the validity of giving an allegorical meaning to the stories about Athena. She is the subject of improper myths, he argues, again echoing Plato’s critique, “whether with underlying meanings (*hyponoiais*) or without” them. He cites the story of her birth from the head of Zeus and that, although she preserved her virginity, she raised the seed of Hephaestus’ abortive attempt to rape her (*Il.* 2.546–9). Then he suggests that she might be given a figurative meaning (*tropologētai*) and said to be “sound thinking” (*phronēsis*). Origen shows his knowledge of the Stoic allegorical interpretation of Athena here. Heraclitus applied this meaning to her in Homer’s story of Athena preventing Achilles from killing Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.194–200). He says that she brought about his change of mind by “sound thinking” (*phronēsei*)

39 Heine (1982) 117–120 (*Homily on Genesis* 5.5).

40 Heine (1982) 114–117 (*Homily on Genesis* 5.3–4).

and that she gets her name from her “sagacity” (*suneseōs*). She is called Athena (*Athēna*) because she is a “Seer” (*athrēna*), which he associates with the verb *diathrein*, “to examine something carefully”.<sup>41</sup> He also asserts that this is why she was a virgin, that is, because “sound thinking” (*phronēsis*) is always “uncorrupted”, and why she was said to have been born from Zeus’ head. Origen mentions both of these points in his discussion of Athena in this section. One must show, however, Origen insists, that Athena really exists (he seems to mean as a goddess) in such a way to support this figurative meaning and that she was not just some mortal that humans declared to be divine (*Cels.* 8.66–7).

Both Celsus and Origen seem also to have shared the same or a similar view about the relation of an allegorical reading to the literal meaning of the story being allegorized. The meaning given to a story should express the intention (*boulēma*) of the author of the story. This implies, of course, that the authors were aware that there was a deeper meaning lying under what they were saying. Origen is quite explicit about this in relation to the authors of the Biblical writings (*Cels.* 4.49). “It is clear,” he says, “that Moses saw in his mind the truth of the Law and the allegorical meanings related to the anagogical sense (*tas kata anagōgēn allēgorias*) of the stories he recorded.”<sup>42</sup> He accuses Celsus of reading the books of Moses carelessly when he asserts that Moses’ stories lack hidden meaning. Origen applies to Moses what Homer said of Calchas, the best of the Greek seers, “who knew the things that are, the things that will be, and those that were before” (*Il* 1.70). Moses, he says, knew such things better than the seers mentioned “by the poets” (*Cels.* 4.55). He is nearly as explicit about the authors of Greek myths having an intention to say something deeper than the story told and being aware of what it was. He quotes Plato’s myth of Eros (*Symposium* 203 B–E) and then argues that anyone who took into account his “intention” in the myth would perceive the “great teachings” he “hid in the form of a myth for the sake of the multitudes”, but ones which would be recognized by those who knew how to discover the intention of an author (*Cels.* 4.39).

Origen suggests taking the Greek myths and the Hebrew stories and comparing them to see the end result “of the intention of those who produced them along with the benefit or harm or neither, [again echoing Plato’s critique] to those who experienced their assumed good deeds” (*Cels.* 8.47). The intelligent reader of Moses’ writings must always carefully consider the “intention” of what he wrote (*Cels.* 5.42). In the Mosaic story of sons of God taking daughters

41 Russell and Konstan (2005) 37. See similar interpretations in Mras (1954) 141, and Lang (1881) 36.

42 Heine (trans.) (1989) 174 (*Commentary on John* 6.22).

of men as wives (Gen. 6:2), Origen says that someone before him, by looking to the “intention” of Moses had related the story to souls taking human bodies (*Cels.* 5.55). Celsus had missed “the intention” of Moses’ mention of “wells” in Scripture (*Cels.* 4.44). In fact, Celsus did not understand the “intention” of the writings of the Jews and Christians at all (*Cels.* 4.17; 3.74).

Celsus also insists on the importance of the connection between the “intention” of the author and the allegorical meaning given to the story. He accuses the Christians of “forcing the intention” of the Biblical authors when they allegorize them because the writings are “so simple and amateurish” (*Cels.* 4.87). Failure to understand the intention of the author of the Greek myths leads to misunderstanding, especially by the Christians. Celsus asserts that the pre-Socratic Heraclitus and Pherecydes enigmatically hinted at a divine war. This was the “intention” of their sayings and stories, just as it was the intention in other myths of the Egyptians and Greeks, including Homer’s stories of Zeus throwing Hephaestus from heaven and suspending Hera in space (*Il* 1.590–1; 15.18–24). It was the failure of Christians to perceive this intention in these myths that led them to create their doctrine of a being called the devil who is opposed to God (*Cels.* 6.42).

While Origen and Celsus shared some basic assumptions about the allegorical reading of stories, there was one important point in Origen’s reading that belonged exclusively to the Christian allegorical reading of the stories in their Scriptures. This was the understanding that the stories and sayings in Scripture were focused ultimately on Christ. In reply to Celsus’ contention that Christians and Jews had the same understanding of the Mosaic stories, Origen distinguishes the Jewish reading of Moses from the Christian reading on the basis of the two different understandings of the intention (*boulēma*) of the Mosaic writings. Using Pauline language, he says that a veil lies on the heart of everyone reading Moses who is not a follower of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:15–16). This veil hides the intention of the Mosaic writings. But if one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, and that person’s mind is flooded with the light of the truth of what the Mosaic writings mean (*Cels.* 5.60).<sup>43</sup> It was Christ that Origen searched for in his reading of Moses.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, Origen knew the Homeric poems well, though he never refers to them outside the *Contra Celsum*. He treats the Homeric writings as literature that is deserving of counter argument, and he sees them occasionally as useful in the establishment of his own argument against a pagan viewpoint, such as

43 See Fédou (1988) 138–139.

44 See Heine (1997) 142–144.

divination from birds. He is, of course, firmly opposed to the polytheistic view of deity in Homer's writings.

Both Origen and Celsus interpreted ancient writings allegorically. It is rather paradoxical that a major difference between them concerned the literal meaning of the texts to be interpreted. Celsus' argument against the allegorical reading of Moses has its roots in his denigration of the literal meaning of the Mosaic stories. They are, he asserts, so silly, crudely constructed, and unbelievable that they do not deserve an allegorical interpretation.

Origen certainly had a more respectful view of Homer than Celsus had of Moses. His objection to the literal meaning of the Homeric stories was much like that of Plato centuries earlier. The immoral actions of the gods depicted by Homer posed a threat to simpler minds that did not understand that the stories were intended to be read allegorically or did not have the educational background to read them in this way. Moses, on the other hand, Origen argued, wrote so as to benefit all levels of people who heard his stories, from the simplest minds to the most sophisticated.

Origen never appealed to the Homeric writings to establish Christian truth in general. The Homeric poems were "foundational texts" for a culture that held an alien view of deity from his viewpoint. The Mosaic writings, on the other hand, while belonging to the Jewish community, had been adopted as "foundational texts" by Christians as well. It was on this basis that Origen could consider them to speak allegorically of Christ. Such a reading of Homer, from Origen's perspective, was not a possibility.

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## Homer and Eusebius of Caesarea

*Mark Edwards*

Since he speaks of men who died before 270 CE as his contemporaries, the date of Eusebius' birth is thought to have fallen between 260 and 265. He must have been over 30 when he succeeded Agapius as bishop of Caesarea in 313 and held this position until his death in 339 or 340. A student of Origen's disciple Pamphilus, he defends Origen with vigour in his continuation of Pamphilus's *Apology*, and also in his best-known work, the *Ecclesiastical History*. His writings on behalf of Christianity include the *Preparation for the Gospel*, *Demonstration of the Gospel*, and *Theophany*. He was a prominent, or rather obstreperous figure, at the Council of Nicaea, and a friend of the Emperor Constantine, who urged him in vain to take up the vacant see of Antioch after 327. His *Life of Constantine*, written shortly after the latter's death in 337, is the last of his major works.

Eusebius was a polymath, and an important source of information on many ancient writers whose works have perished. Scholars have understandably taken more interest in these testimonies than in his desultory observations on Homer, which tell the Homeric scholar nothing that could not be found elsewhere. On the other hand, his treatment of the most famous name in the pagan canon perhaps deserves more attention than it has yet received from students of early Christian apologetic. Homer was regarded by Herodotus as the creator of the Greek pantheon (*Histories* 2.53), and by Thucydides as the historian of the first enterprise in which the Greeks acted as a single people (*Peloponnesian War* 1.9). In an agonistic society, to be the first is to be everyone's rival, and there may be less piety than self-assertion in the efforts of Xenophanes and Stesichorus to write poems that were more worthy of the gods.<sup>1</sup> Socrates – Plato's Socrates – exaggerates Homer's influence on the young, and insists that only the living voice, not the recital of the dead, can awaken wisdom; for all that, his sentence of banishment on Homer has been handed down to us by

1 Even scholars who treat these authors in the same volume, such as Fraenkel (1975) 281, 287–290 and 330–331, are apt to forget that Xenophanes is not only a philosopher but a poet with an eristic relation to Homer.

the same art of writing which transformed the ductile lays of the rhapsodes into rigid texts.<sup>2</sup>

Stability is not in fact an inevitable result of the scribal process; it was centuries of critical labour, chiefly in Alexandria, that stripped the epics of their supposed accretions, and this confirmed their status as unsurpassable works of art. The sophists of the Roman era professed to think them inimitable but not infallible; nevertheless, when Philostratus and Dio Chrysostom penned their own accounts of the Trojan War,<sup>3</sup> their readers knew that these were not histories but the improvisations of literary men who thought it possible, even after a thousand years, to emulate the father of song. Eusebius inherited all the learning and none of the wit of the Second Sophistic:<sup>4</sup> to him there was one Greek text which gave a true account of God and an accurate record of his dealings with humanity from the beginning of the world. We shall see that in his *Chronicle* he belittles the historical significance of the *Iliad*, while in his *Preparation for the Gospel* he takes up the ancient charge that Homer misrepresents the gods.

Material for this study is not copious, though Eusebius was a prolific author: we shall find no long citations from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, and few citations of any kind except through an intermediary. In this respect he resembles the second-century apologists, who, being unable to make an ally of Homer, borrowed fewer quotations from him than from Orpheus and the Sibyl. He must have been aware that in the third century CE Christian authors had begun trade on the eminence of the poet. For Clement of Alexandria<sup>5</sup> he was at times a harbinger and at times a plagiarist of the Scriptures; for Methodius<sup>6</sup> and the Gnostics he was a mine of productive allegory;<sup>7</sup> Origen, while denying that any figurative reading could acquit him of superstition and obscenity, was not ashamed to draw *ad hominem* arguments against Celsus from his observations

2 Texts cited below in discussion of Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel*.

3 See Dio *Orat.* 12; Anderson (1986) 141–158 on the *Heroicus* of Philostratus. See also Allen (1969) 130–176 on Dictys of Crete.

4 See further Kim (2010).

5 Contrast *Strom.* 5.4.24.1 with 5.14.100.5 (citing *Il.* 14.206 as a plagiarism from *Genesis*).

6 Methodius *On Free Will* 1.1–4 in *Werke*. ed. Bonwetsch, 145–146; cf. H. Rahner (1971) 335–339.

7 Lanzilloti (2010) 401–420. While Lanzilloti perceives that the return of Odysseus has been blended with the migration of Abraham, neither she nor other scholars have noticed that the soul wears two distinct Homeric guises in this treatise. In her fallen state she is a scarlet Penelope, yielding without resistance to the vices that besiege her; after her repentance, she is “made male” as Gnostic imagery prescribes, and becomes Odysseus weeping on a foreign strand (cf. also Plotinus *Enneads* 1.6.8).

of the natural world.<sup>8</sup> Eusebius, however, is not always Origen's pupil, and Homer for him is simply the straw man of Hellenism, a synecdoche (as the best of the Greeks themselves perceived) for all that was base and laughable in popular religion. Since Platonists, in his eyes, were the natural friends of Christianity, poets and sophists were its natural enemies, and neither their eulogies of Homer nor their efforts to overreach him have left an echo in his undisputed works.

## 1 Homeric Chronology

Like the majority of Greek chronographers, Eusebius adopts the fall of Troy as the beginning of an epoch.<sup>9</sup> The date of this had been fixed at 1184 BCE by the Alexandrian scientist Eratosthenes,<sup>10</sup> who was followed by Apollodorus, Porphyry,<sup>11</sup> and Clement of Alexandria.<sup>12</sup> In his *Chronicle*, however, Eusebius deducted two years from this calculation by a process which Mosshammer unravels as follows.<sup>13</sup> In Apollodorus, his usual authority, the list of Spartan kings, or Agiads, spans 354 years from the return of the sons of Heracles to the 37th and final year of Alcamenes. Apollodorus synchronised the tenth year of Alcamenes with the first Olympiad in 776 BCE,<sup>14</sup> which by his reckoning therefore fell about 327 years after the return of the Heraclids in 1104/3 BCE. In Diodorus Siculus, on the other hand, the Agiads fill an interval of only 325 years, terminating once again in the 37th year of Alcamenes.<sup>15</sup> He appears to have dated the return of the Heraclids to 1075/4 BCE, a few years prior to the date of 1070/69 established by the historian Ephorus.<sup>16</sup> In conscious harmony

8 Origen *Against Celsus* 4.36 and 4.91. On the debate between Platonists and the disciples of Origen see P. Sellew (1989) 79–100.

9 For the Armenian version of the *Chronicle* see Karst (1911). For Jerome's Latin derivative see Helm (1956). The Greek fragments were collected by Schoene (1875). For a recent review of many thorny questions see Burgess (1999).

10 See Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.138.1 with Eusebius *Chron.* 135.19 Karst. See further Jacoby (1929) 1012–1013.

11 Whether Porphyry himself (232/4-c. 305 CE) wrote a *Chronicle* is now a disputed question: see Croke (1983) 168–185; Barnes (1994) 55–57. For the argument that Eusebius' *Chronicle* was an apologetic retort to Porphyry see Burgess (1997) 471–504.

12 See Tatian *Oration to the Greeks* 31 and Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.139 for collations of Greek opinions.

13 Mosshammer (1979) 184–185.

14 Jacoby *FGH* 2B (1929) 1037–1038 (244 F 62), citing Eusebius *Chron.* 105.12 Karst.

15 Eusebius *Chronicle* 106 Karst.

16 Mosshammer (1979) 186.

with Apollodorus,<sup>17</sup> Diodorus made the tenth year of Alcamenes coincide with the first Olympiad in 776 BCE. Although the Armenian version of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius suggests that he was aware of this synchronism,<sup>18</sup> the Latin shows him adopting another chronology in which it was not the tenth year of Alcamenes but the end of his reign that corresponded to the first Olympiad;<sup>19</sup> the 325 years of Diodorus were now intercalated between the first Olympiad and the return of the Heraclids, perhaps by deliberate conflation with the 327 years that elapse between the same events in the reckoning of Apollodorus. The substitution of 325 for 327 yields a date of 1102/1 BCE for the return of the Heraclids, two years after the date computed by Apollodorus. In agreement with the latter, however, Eusebius places the Trojan War exactly 80 years earlier. Thus, his Trojan epoch commences not in 1184 BCE but in 1182.

These divergent chronologies may be tabulated as follows

	Apollodorus	Diodorus	Eusebius
Fall of Troy	1184	1184	1182
Return of Heraclidae	1104/3	1075/4	1102/1
First Olympiad	776	776	776
Death of Alcamenes	749	749	776

But what was the date of Homer, the poet of Troy? Eusebius records that Porphyry, in his *History of Philosophy*, had followed Apollodorus in stating the interval between the fall of Troy (1184) and the first Olympiad (777/776) to be 407 years.<sup>20</sup> In the same work, as we learn from the *Suda*, Porphyry had fixed the acme of the poet Hesiod at 809 BCE, some 32 years before the first Olympiad.<sup>21</sup> Eusebius, since he endorsed this date in his *Chronicle*, must have been aware of Porphyry's computation, and will also have known that he set the acme of Homer 100 years before that of Hesiod.<sup>22</sup> This yields a date of 909 BCE, 275 years after the fall of Troy. For Porphyry, therefore, Homer flourished four generations before the first Olympiad. He concurs in this reckoning with the

17 Cf. Diodorus *Histories* 1.5.1. Here we are told that Apollodorus calculated 80 years from the fall of Troy to the return of the Heraclids, and 328 from this even to the first Olympiad.  
18 *Chron.* 106 Karst as above.  
19 *Chron.* 86–8 Helm.  
20 Schoene (1875), reprinted with annotation in Nauck (1886) 4–5.  
21 *Suda* s.v. “Hesiod”; this appears as Jacoby (1929) 260 F20.  
22 *Suda* s.v. “Homer” at Jacoby (1929) 260 F19.

Parian marble,<sup>23</sup> but not with Apollodorus, for whom Hesiod's acme fell in 807, not 809, while Homer preceded him by four full generations, reaching his acme in 944 BCE.<sup>24</sup> It would seem that, in contrast to Porphyry, he is purposely upholding the tradition that made Homer a contemporary of the Spartan king Lycurgus. Eusebius embraced neither of these dates for the first of poets: in the derivative *Chronicle* of Jerome, the *floruit* of Homer is set 100 years before the first Olympiad on the authority of Nepos, while Apollodorus and Euphorbus are said to agree in placing him 124 years before the founding of Rome (77b Helm). Both computations yield a date of 877/6 BCE. Eusebius would appear to have misread Apollodorus; it was in fact the chronographer Sosibius<sup>25</sup> who assigned Homer to the eighth year of the Spartan king Charilaus, which was reckoned to fall about ninety years before the first Olympiad in 867/6 BCE.

In his *Preparation for the Gospel*<sup>26</sup> Eusebius quotes Tatian, the second-century apologist,<sup>27</sup> as a witness to a reckoning which assigns the great poet to a much later period. Having noted that Crates placed him less than eighty years after the Trojan War, while Eratosthenes lengthened the interval to 100 years, Aristarchus to 140, Philochorus to 180, Apollodorus to 240, and "some" to 317, Tatian adds that "others" make him coeval with Archilochus, who flourished in the twenty-third Olympiad, 500 years after the Trojan War, in the reign of Gyges, king of Lydia. This yields a date of 684 BCE, which is likely enough for Archilochus (undoubtedly a contemporary of Gyges<sup>28</sup>), though Eusebius in his *Chronicle* assigns this date to the later poet Hipponax.<sup>29</sup> He may have hoped to reconcile Tatian with Clement of Alexandria,<sup>30</sup> who reveals that his source for the synchronization of Homer and Archilochus was the Alexandrian poet and scholar Euphoriion; Clement refers, however, to the eighteenth Olympiad (708–704 BCE) as the beginning of Gyges' reign, not as the acme of either Homer or Archilochus. Since Clement in fact is not contradicting Tatian, we need not ask whether he based his chronology on the Parian marble, where (as Mosshammer has observed<sup>31</sup>) it is this Olympiad that falls 500 years after the

23 Jacoby (1904) 11.

24 So Tatian *Orat.* 31.

25 Cf. Mosshammer (1979) 196–197; Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.117.10, cited by F. Jacoby (1950) 714 (595 F2).

26 The date of publication remains uncertain. For a recent discussion see Barnes (2009) 1–14.

27 Tatian *Orat.* 31 and 36–42, quoted at length in *Prep.* 10.11.1–35.

28 Mosshammer (1979) 211.

29 The date implied at 93b Helm is in fact 688 BC; at 94b Archilochus is said to have flourished c. 664.

30 Clement *Strom.* 1.101–2–107.6, quoted at length in *Prep.* 10.12.1–31.

31 Mosshammer (1979) 212–213, noting that Theopompus placed both Homer and Archilochus 500 years after the Trojan War. Cf. Jacoby (1904) 9.

Trojan War. It is likely enough that Eusebius had not read Clement carefully, and certain that he did not need to do so, his object being only to establish that, whatever date we assign to Homer, he cannot rival Moses in antiquity. A passage from Josephus, somewhat inaccurately transcribed, suggests that even the works that go under Homer's name are less venerable than the Greeks imagine:<sup>32</sup>

Οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ἅπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ χρόνου δύναιτό τις ἂν δεῖξαι σφζομένην ἀναγραφὴν οὔτ' ἐν ἱεροῖς οὔτ' ἐπὶ δημοσίοις ἀναθήμασιν· ὅπου γε καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐπὶ Τροίαν τοσούτοις ἔτεσι στρατευσάντων ὕστερον πολλὴ γέγονεν ἀπορία καὶ ζήτησις εἰ γράμμασιν ἐχρῶντο· καὶ τάληθές ἐπικρατεῖ μᾶλλον περὶ τοῦ τὴν νῦν οὖσαν τῶν γραμμάτων χρήσιν ἐκείνους ἀγνοεῖν. ὅλως δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν οὐδὲν ὁμολογούμενον εὐρίσκεται γράμμα τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως πρεσβύτερον· οὗτος δὲ καὶ τῶν Τρωικῶν ὕστερος φαίνεται γενόμενος. καὶ φασιν οὐδὲ τοῦτον ἐν γράμμασι τὴν αὐτοῦ ποίησιν καταλιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ διαμνημονευομένην ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων ὕστερον συντεθῆναι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλὰς ἐν αὐτῇ σχεῖν τὰς διαφωνίας.

One cannot point to any written record that has been preserved from that time [i.e., the time of Cadmus the Phoenician] either in temples or in public repositories. In fact, there has been much uncertainty and inquiry as to whether writing was used by those who took part in the campaign against Troy so many years later; the truth seems most likely to be that they were ignorant of the use of writing as this now exists among us. Generally speaking, one can find no agreed specimen of writing among the Greeks that is older than the poetry of Homer, and it is clear that he lived even later than the Trojan War. And they say that even he did not leave his poetry in writing, but it was committed to memory and subsequently put together from writings (ἐκ γραμμάτων), and that this is the reason for the numerous variants.

How can a corpus that was never published have been put together from writings? The logically incongruous words ἐκ γραμμάτων are not found in the original, and may be the flotsam of another tradition, according to which the poems of Homer were at first committed to writing, but so negligently handled that only scraps of the text survived, while the rest was preserved by recitation. The ancients give us different accounts of the measures by which Pisistratus, the Athenian tyrant, carried out his celebrated recension of the

32 *Prep.* 10.7.7–10.7.8, quoting Josephus *Against Apion* 1.12.

*Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>33</sup> Cicero speaks of his reassembling scattered books (*On the Orator* 3.37), while others say that he held a competition at which each rhapsode, or professional bard, declaimed as many lines as he could remember. We cannot say whether Cicero's source (if he had one) was familiar to Eusebius; from Plato, at least, he had heard of Creophylus, the poet's nephew, who, when copies of the epics had been entrusted to him, was so blind to their merits that he left the publication to his heirs.<sup>34</sup>

The superior antiquity of Moses is deduced, in the *Preparation for the Gospel*, from the harmonization of both the Greek and the biblical chronology with that of the Persian Empire.<sup>35</sup> From the figures thus obtained, a date corresponding to the first Olympiad can be derived for the prophet Isaiah. Since the date of every king's reign and every judge's tenure before Isaiah is recorded in the Old Testament, it is easily ascertained that the fall of Troy took place in the time of Samuel, and hence that Moses antedates it by some centuries. Homer, whatever date we attach to his acme, is thus a man of yesterday compared to the author of the Pentateuch. A similar truth can be elicited – much against the author's will, no doubt – from Porphyry's boast that his compatriot Sanchuniathon wrote his history of the Phoenician pantheon long before the Trojan War, in the days when Semiramis reigned in Nineveh. He received his information, according to Porphyry, from predecessors whose times approached those of Moses. On the most parsimonious reckoning, therefore, Moses was an older contemporary of Semiramis, and very much Homer's senior. If there is any record outside the Scriptures of the events that Moses witnessed, it must be sought among the Egyptians, since even the Phoenicians can produce no book that is strictly coeval with the time of Moses, while the memory of the Greeks has been curtailed by periodic disasters, as Plato testifies in the *Timaeus*.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, there was nothing new in the assumption that the oldest text is always the most veridical. Even the most mendacious of Greek historians professed to set a high value on the narrative of an eyewitness, and it was generally the most innovative philosophers who appealed most loudly to the ancient masters. In Plato's dialogues speakers other than Socrates cite Homer as an

33 See Allen (1969) 225–248, esp. 232–233 on the legend of the seventy-two redactors, which illustrates the influence of the biblical tradition on the Christian perception of Homer.

34 *Prep.* 12.49.8, citing Plato *Republic* 600b 6–9. See further Strabo *Geogr.* 14.1.8; Callimachus *Epigr.* 6 Pfeiffer; Murray (1996) 206.

35 See *Prep.* 10.11.6ff, quoting Tatian *Oration* 36–42. For Christian appeals to the antiquity of Moses see Droge (1989); Ridings (1995). Discrepancies in Christian datings of Moses are seldom occasioned by theological differences: see Adler (2006) 147–160.

36 Plato *Tim.* 22b at *Prep.* 10.4.19; cf. *Chron.* 2.20–28 Karst.

author to be elucidated rather than refuted; in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* the description of a cave in Ithaca is interpreted allegorically, on the plea that even if no such place existed in fact it would not have been invented without a reason (p. 58.16–21 Nauck). Like his teacher Plotinus and his colleague Amelius, Porphyry was an admirer of Numenius, the second-century Platonist or Pythagorean, whose own words barely survive except in the copious transcriptions of Eusebius.<sup>37</sup> The latter's *Preparation for the Gospel* is our only source of excerpts from a ribald treatise *On the Defection of the Academy*.<sup>38</sup> Numenius purports to explain the emergence of the sceptical philosophy from a series of blunders, rivalries, and intrigues, each new episode setting another pupil against his master and rendering the school more perversely hostile to the evidence of the senses. The ensuing battles are punctuated by Homeric tags – a flippant interlacing of old and new which may have the purpose of throwing into relief the inauthenticity of the sceptical position. Perhaps it is also intended to suggest that one cannot be a faithful Platonist if one reads only Plato. Numenius furnished the model for Porphyry's allegorical reading of the *Odyssey*;<sup>39</sup> he maintained that the quest for truth must be carried back beyond Plato to earlier founts of wisdom (not all of them Greek), and he is credited with the dictum "What is Plato but an Atticizing Moses?"<sup>40</sup> It can be argued, therefore, that the intrusion of Homer's Ionic dialect into this history of an Athenian quarrel serves to illustrate the eclectic character of the true philosophy.

## 2 Poetry and Truth

We cannot say how well Eusebius understood the philosopher whose amanuensis he chose to be; he was certainly not disposed to grant that Platonism could be enriched by the figurative exegesis of Homer. Just as Numenius urged his readers back from the Academy to Plato, so Eusebius makes long excerpts from two dialogues to show that latter-day Platonists are honouring a false prophet when they seek their own philosophy in Homer. In one of these, a

37 On Eusebius and Numenius see Strutwolf (1999) 118–147.

38 In the edition of Des Places *Numénios: Fragments* (1973), *Prep.* 14.4.16–39 appears as Fr. 24; 14.5.10–6.14 as Fr. 25; 14.7.1–15 as Fr. 26; 14.8.1–15 as Fr. 27; 14.9.1–4 as Fr. 9.1–4. Numenius cites the following lines from the *Iliad*: 4.447–9, 450, 472; 5.85; 7.206; 8.94; 10.8; 13.31. For literary analysis see Lamberton (1986) 54–78.

39 Porphyry *Cave of the Nymphs* p. 79/19–80.2 Nauck.

40 *Prep.* 11.10.14; cf. 9.6.7. Eusebius is quoting Clement *Strom.* 1.22.150, with reservations: see Edwards (1990) 67.



playful exchange from the *Theaetetus*,<sup>41</sup> Homer is cited as one of numerous witnesses to an intractable schism among the Greek philosophers. Socrates is contrasting two ontologies, one of which affirms the immutability of being, while the other contends that nothing is more real than change and flux. The exponents of the first are Parmenides and the Eleatics; the second is the doctrine of Heraclitus and Protagoras, though their followers might as well be called Homerids, since it was the “father of tragedy” (as Socrates styles him<sup>42</sup>) who first said that all things owe their origin to Ocean and Tethys. Just as they hold that nothing is truly permanent, so these thinkers are volatile in opinion, bombastic in speech and incapable of sustaining a disciplined regimen of question and answer in any disputation with their critics. In the *Sophist*, Plato’s sequel to this dialogue, the combatants are reconciled by a theory of participation, according to which an object that exists or shares in being, must be simultaneously at rest and in motion, of its own kind and not of another, the subject of both affirmation and denial. The sole concern of Eusebius, however, is to prove – or rather to let the Greeks, including Homer, prove for him – that only the unanimity of the Scriptures can put an end to the logomachy of the Greek schools.

In a longer excerpt<sup>43</sup> he transcribes the famous valediction to poetry from the tenth book of the *Republic*. If a poet is to be the instructor of humanity, argues Socrates, he must be perfectly acquainted with the matter of which he writes: the less he knows of this, the less he is able to communicate to others. Imagine then that Homer were to come to our ideal city and we sought his advice, not on medicine or some other art that he handles only in passing, but on war and statecraft, the principal subjects of his own *Iliad*. Of course, he would have nothing of substance to tell us, and would be sent on his way with a courteous blessing and a prayer to return no more. Had Homer been the great teacher that he is supposed to have been, he would not have lacked disciples; his countrymen would not have allowed him to go abroad as an itinerant rhapsode, and he would not have been slighted in his own lifetime by his friend Creophylus. The fact that he has no pupil, from his own day to ours, who can offer a testimonial to his wisdom proves that the poet is no more than a painter in words, a second-hand copyist of things which in themselves are poor simulacra of entities in a higher realm.

41 *Theaet.* 152a–153a at *Prep.* 14.4.1–12.

42 See *Rep.* 595c at *Prep.* 12.49.2. The phrase from Homer (*Il.* 14.201) appears also as a citation from Diodorus Siculus 1.12.5 at *Prep.* 3.3.5.

43 *Rep.* 599b–6–1b at *Prep.* 12.49.3–14.

These are the words of Plato, not Eusebius, but they are obviously reproduced with approbation.<sup>44</sup> For Eusebius it is the capstone to his argument that Plato was the prince of Greek philosophers because he eschewed the teachings of his countrymen and secretly turned instead to the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere, as evidence that Homer himself engaged in similar plagiarisms, he quotes a line which alludes to the holiness of the seventh day.<sup>46</sup> Such opportunism is rarer in his work than in that of earlier Christian writers: at other times he cites Homer as a pagan theologian, whose adepts love to repeat his praise of Zeus as “father of gods and men”, or deduce from the line on Ocean and Tethys, quoted above, that their religion began with the worship of the elements.<sup>47</sup> That this is “said” is enough for him, as it reveals that the Greeks did not believe their own gods to be true gods; again it suits his purpose to relay, without further commentary, the theory that the poet wrote the following lines to explain why the gods took different forms in Egypt:

καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσι, / παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστροφῶσι  
πόλῃας, / ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες.

The gods too, resembling strangers of many kinds, travel through cities in all guises, taking note of human arrogance and just dealing.

*Od.* 17.485–7, cited from Diodorus 1.12.10 at *Preparation* 3.3.9

The impossibility of co-opting Homer as a philosophic ally is illustrated by an extract from the Peripatetic Diogenianus. The latter begins by commenting on three texts which the Stoic Chrysippus had adduced as illustrations of his belief that everything is ruled by fate.<sup>48</sup> In the first (*Il.* 23.78–9) a hero laments that the Κῆρ (*kêr*), or bane, decreed for him at birth has overtaken him; in the second (*Il.* 20.127–8) it is prophesied that a warrior will at last suffer what was woven for him by Αἶσα (*aisa*), or destiny, when his mother bore him; in the third (*Il.* 6.488) we are told that what is ordained by Moira or Fate is not to be

44 See also the quotation of *Rep.* 377c–383a at *Prep.* 13.3.12–17, where Plato cites the following Homeric verses to illustrate the impiety of the poets: *Il.* 24.529, 24.530, 24.532, 4.84, 19.224; *Od.* 4.312.

45 At *Prep.* 13.1.3.23, *Il.* 7.99 is adduced as a plagiarism from Isaiah 10.6. Cf. the citations of *Il.* 14.206 at 13.13.24 and 18.483 at 13.13.26.

46 A spurious hexameter, quoted at *Prep.* 13.12.14 on the authority of Philo and at 13.13.34 on that of Clement. For another interpolation preserved or created in Christian circles, see Julius Africanus *Cestoi* ed. Wallraff (2012) 37–41.

47 *Prep.* 14.4.1; see also 3.3.4 (Diodorus 1.21.1), citing *Il.* 1.544; 33.5 (Diodorus 1.12.5), citing *Il.* 14.201.

48 *Prep.* 6.8.1–2.

evaded. Diogenianus scoffs<sup>49</sup> that the Stoic has forgotten two passages quoted in the second book of his own work, one of which deplores the ruin that men's own folly has brought upon them (*Od.* 1.7), while in the other Zeus exclaims that mortals are all too ready to lay the consequences of their own rash deeds at the feet of the gods (*Od.* 1.32–4). He proceeds to argue that even the lines to which Chrysippus appeals do not favour a doctrine of universal fatalism. The first and second imply at most that the manner and date of an individual's death is ordained at the time of his birth; the third is a mere tautology, since no-one denies that if something fated it will come to pass. In the same book of the *Preparation*, Eusebius quotes two oracles on Homer, both preserved by the Cynic Oenomaus. In the first the immortal fame of the poet is described as a compensation for his blindness in both eyes; in the second both the identity of his mother and his lot in his final years are left in obscurity, allowing the Cynic to argue with his usual scurrility that Apollo, patron of poetry though he is said to be, is of no use to his favourites in this world.

From what has been said it will already be apparent that Eusebius thought Plato better company for a Christian than Homer. So much is true, no doubt, of every Christian apologist, but Eusebius is unusually tenacious in his search for Platonic teachings which are homologous to the doctrine of the Trinity. In this quest two Platonists of recent times, Numenius and Amelius (together with the so-called Second Letter of Plato himself), are of particular service to him; it was not, however, in these tributaries but at the source that he found the most eloquent and trenchant critique of Homer. Thus he can mock the Greeks by turning the weight of one classic author against another; at the same time, by kneading Plato's satires into a more comprehensive argument against polytheism, he intimates that even the best philosophers have failed to mend the worst errors of the poets. The reason is that they failed to grasp that these errors originate not in the human fancy but in the operation of demons. Where Plato had accused Homer of speaking falsely about the true gods, Eusebius opines that he was speaking the truth about false gods. The identification of pagan gods with fallen angels is a Christian platitude, but Eusebius characteristically insinuates that it was also a platitude among the poets. Or rather, he trusts the reader to surmise, from Plutarch's comment that δαίμων and θεός are often synonyms in Homer,<sup>50</sup> that the poet was more astute than the philosopher who quotes him. Homer unmasks his gods by stigmatizing them as

49 *Prep.* 6.8.2–3. It is possible that Chrysippus was drawing a contrast between the philosophy of the *Odyssey* and that of the *Iliad*.

50 *Prep.* 5.4.1, citing Plutarch *On the Decline of the Oracles* 415. On the true doctrine of Plutarch, see Schroeder (2010) 148–168.

demons; to Plutarch, on the other hand, a daemon is no impostor but a surrogate appointed by the true deity to give oracles at his shrine.

There is malice in this citation of a treatise *On the Silence of the Oracles* a few years after Diocletian's persecution of Christians had been sanctioned, if not instigated, by the voice of Apollo.<sup>51</sup> The oracles had proved themselves after all not dumb but delusive, as Eusebius himself had demonstration by a long excerpt from the Cynic Oenomaus in Book 5 of the *Preparation for the Gospel*. In that text Homer had been the butt of ridicule; here he quietly gives the lie to a pagan sophistry.

### 3 Afterthoughts of a Sophist

About a century before Eusebius, as we noted in the first paragraph of this essay, the *Heroicus* of Philostratus had given the lie to Homer's account of the siege and fall of Troy.<sup>52</sup> Philostratus, an accomplished rhetorician, was the first to describe the age of eloquence into which he was born as a Second Sophistic. If the burlesque *Heroicus* is his *Iliad*, the seriocomic *Life of Apollonius* is his *Odyssey*, whose protagonist witnesses marvels and resists magic as he passes through fabulous territories, reclining with an unwarlike king in India, confounding a jealous band of rivals in Egypt, and escaping the prison of a Roman Cyclopes, without once being robbed of his god-given wisdom which is the allegorical counterpart of Athena. The equivalent of the Nekuia, or consultation with the dead in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, is the raising of Achilles' ghost, recounted, according to the Homeric precedent, in the first person (*Life of Apollonius* 4.1.6.1). Apollonius boasts that he dug no trench like Odysseus but used only the prayers that the Indians had taught to him in order to question Achilles concerning the number of the Greek heroes, whether Helen had come to Troy in person, whether Polyxena had been sacrificed, and whether Palamedes (whom Homer never mentions) had taken part in the siege. Philostratus, who may be suspected on other occasions of parodying the gospels,<sup>53</sup> was writing at a time when the church was at peace with the ruling dynasty, if not always with local magnates. In the course of Diocletian's persecution, however, a sophist named Hierocles attacked Christianity in a work which drew an invidious comparison between Jesus and Apollonius.

51 See Digeser (2004) 57–77; Edwards (2011).

52 See further Whitmarsh (2013) 101–122.

53 See Baur (1832).

The Christian rejoinder to this,<sup>54</sup> attributed to Eusebius, is not a critique of Hierocles, but a captious reading of the *Life of Apollonius*, in which one passage after another is adduced as evidence of his human frailty. Philostratus, who aims at most to show that Apollonius was superior to the heroes of mythology, would not have regarded this as a criticism. For the Christian author, however, the issue is no longer between Apollonius and Odysseus, but between the idol of the philosophers and the son of God. Accordingly, he subjects the work of Philostratus to a prolonged interrogation of the kind that had been applied to the canonical gospels in the second century by Celsus, and more recently (as some scholars hold<sup>55</sup>) by Porphyry or by Hierocles himself.<sup>56</sup>

Stronger and weaker arguments have been advanced for doubting the authorship of this diatribe.<sup>57</sup> Among the weaker arguments is the absence of any reference to the Scriptures, which was hardly to be expected in a work that set out to expose the pretensions of a pagan thaumaturge, using only the testimony of his disciples. A much stronger argument can be drawn from the gilded style, so prodigal in the tools and tropes of virtuoso eloquence, whose like is not to be found elsewhere in the vast Eusebian corpus. If he were more of a literary artist, we might surmise that he shunned this style on most occasions because he thought it unworthy of a serious Christian and adopts it here in mockery of his pagan adversary. But, in fact, he is not a literary artist: his writing elsewhere is laboured, ungainly, and frequently opaque. Are we to assume, then, that he could write well only when aping a style that he felt to be meretricious?

Whatever weight is accorded to these caveats, the text is part of the corpus as we have it and does not fall below the standard of taste or cogency that we

54 For text see Jones (2006) 147–257. This includes a prefatory defence of its authenticity.

55 The standard edition of Porphyry's *Against the Christians* by von Harnack (1926) includes many excerpts from the *Apocriticus* of Macarius Magnes, which are attributed in that work to an anonymous and perhaps fictitious Hellene. Barnes (1973, 424–442) rightly protested against the common practice of citing these texts as though they were known to be Porphyrian. Reference to a twelfth or thirteenth book of *Against the Christians* by Jerome (Harnack, fr. 44), and to a fourth book by Eusebius (*Chron. Hieron.* p. 8 Helm) suffice to refute the theory of Beatrice (1989, 248–281) that the three books of the *Philosophy from Oracles* represent his only assault on Christianity. They are in fact distinguished from “the work against us” by Eusebius at *Preparation* 5.36.5. It is not so certain, however, that the fifteen *logoi* known to the Suda, and perhaps to Jerome, had been combined by Porphyry himself in a single work. See Berchman (2005) and Edwards (2007) 116.

56 For Hierocles see Lactantius *Div. Institut.* 5.2 and T.D. Barnes (1976) 239–252. On his relation to Macarius Magnes see now Digeser (2002) 466–502. For text and translation of Macarius see now Goulet (2003).

57 Hägg (1992) 138–150 was the first to construct a detailed case against the authenticity of the work. Notable rejoinders include Jones (2006) 49–52 and Borzi (2003) 397–416. For an answer to both see Johnson (2013) 574–594.

commonly reach in Christian polemic of this era. In one respect it is thoroughly Eusebian: it takes no account of the eristic relation between Philostratus and Homer.<sup>58</sup> He insinuates that the raising of the ghost was a mirage, and that if real it was malevolent, since it vanished when the cock crowed (*Against Hierocles* 29.1). Why, he wonders, did Apollonius not allow his acolyte Damis to share in the ritual (29.1)?<sup>59</sup> How could a man who knew everything have been uncertain at first as to whether this was the place of burial (28.1)? Did he need answers to his trifling questions, and why was he communing at all with a spirit who, as it proved, still cherished a petulant hatred of the dead, and even of the living if he suspected them of Trojan ancestry (29.2)? The author seems here to be picking a quarrel with the Homeric hero, and not only with Apollonius; it might be truer to say that he is handling the work of the sophist as the latter had handled the *Odyssey*. Odysseus, a cunning rogue who sometimes makes deft use of magic, is censured by Philostratus for his failure to employ more pious modes of divination; Apollonius, who claimed only the discernment that a wise man acquires by intercourse with the gods, is ridiculed in this Christian text because he lacks omniscience.

Homer was the absent father of each new generation of Greek writers, and each generation found its way of committing parricide. The way of Eusebius in his *Chronicle* was to shift Homer from the beginning to a late point in the ancestry of his countrymen; his way in the *Preparation for the Gospel* was to condone the strictures of Plato, Oenomaus, and Josephus; in the tract *Against Hierocles*, he or the man whom his name conceals took the way of emulation, overreaching Philostratus by sophistry as Philostratus overreached Homer in his construction of a prose epic. He has no vivid sense of Homer as a classic: he does not foist Christian wisdom upon him, hold him up as a foil to the allegorical use of scripture, or suborn him as a literary model. These are forms of negation which admit the value of the thing negated; the Eusebian corpus practices another mode which, without denying Homer his place in the Greek tradition, implies that this tradition is not, and never has been, capable of raising up seed to him.

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58 He also sneers (*Against Hierocles* 19.2) at an episode in which Apollonius causes two urns, of Homeric dimensions to overflow with wine (*Life of Apollonius* 3.27.2). He is careful to make no allusion to the obvious biblical analogue at John 2.1–11.

59 Perhaps he intends to cast doubt on the existence of Damis, the putative source of Philostratus; cf. Bowie (1978) 1663–1667.

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# “As Leaves Are a Protection to a Tree, So Is Pagan Literature to Christian Truth”: Basil and Gregory Nazianzen on the Importance of Reading Homer

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## 1 General Introduction and Historical Background

It is now generally acknowledged that both Gregory Nazianzen (d. 390 CE) and Basil of Caesarea (d. 379 CE) made wide use of classical authors, including Homer, in their works.<sup>1</sup> For, even in the 17th century *Areopagita*, Milton remarks that Basil read and commented upon Homer's poetry. Furthermore, Milton, in his polemic against governmental provisions against books, remarks that Basil's use of Homer is notable given Julian's decree against Christians studying classical learning as “a persecution more undermining, and secretly decaying the church, than the open cruelty of Decius or Diocletian.” Still, it bears some discussion as to Gregory and Basils' purposes in direct quotations from and allusions to Homer, as well as their discussions relating to Christian adoption of classical learning. By examining where and in what ways Basil and Gregory use Homeric poetry, one might begin to understand the purpose behind their reading Homeric poetry. Namely, their reading appears to take place as part of an ideological battle between Christians and Hellenes in the fourth century CE over who has the rights to inherit classical material. By Christianizing Homeric references and myths, Basil and Gregory show how Christianity appropriated and surpassed Hellenic learning and faith.

Before examining how Basil and Gregory treat Homer in their works, it is important to understand how Christians and non-Christians alike viewed the Christian reception of classical learning. In the first few centuries, Christians took on the school curriculum of the surrounding Hellenists, including reading Homer and the tragedians.<sup>2</sup> Homer, at this time, was read as a precursor to the study of logic and rhetoric. Christians had a particular interest in rhetoric, given their responsibility as preachers, as seen by John Chrysostom, for instance,

1 Allen (1987) 368–381; Saddington (1965) 88–101; Deferrari (1918) 579–591; Malley (1978); Dostálová (1983); Fleury (1930) 55–99; Kustas (1981); Jaeger (1961) 86–102.

2 Marrou (1956) 318–332; Rappe (2001) 405–432.

who studied with the rhetorician Libanius.<sup>3</sup> Because of the success with which Christians, including Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, took in the skills of the rhetorical schools, the Church Fathers of the fourth and early fifth centuries were defined as a “Third Sophistic”.<sup>4</sup> In the fourth century, Christian learning was attacked for its use of classical texts. Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzen once had studied alongside Julian in Athens but were subsequently affected by Julian’s decree in 362 CE against Christians teaching Homeric poetry. Although raised as a Christian, Julian rejected Christianity and became, instead, immersed in Hellenic culture and religious practices. As part of this adherence to Hellenism, Julian took on Homer as “his protective amulet” (*Ep.* 29), fully convinced of the power of the Homeric poems. As another aspect of his belief in the power of the Homeric poems, however, Julian forbade the teaching of classical texts by Christians – a move some scholars say was motivated by Julian’s view that all classical texts are religious texts and, hence, should be read exclusively by those who are members of the pagan cult.<sup>5</sup>

As a reaction against Julian’s edict against Christians teaching Hellenic literary and philosophical texts, Apollinaris of Laodicea (ca. 310–390 CE) and his father attempted to draw up an entirely Christian curriculum.<sup>6</sup> Until this time, Hellenic material had formed the basis of Christian schooling, apart from the Psalms.<sup>7</sup> Christos Simelidis points to Socrates<sup>8</sup> in *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.16.1–5 [p. 210.5–19 Hansen], where Socrates says that the Apollinariii used Homer and the tragedians to paraphrase the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup> What might be added,

3 Webb (2008) 64.

4 Webb (2008) 64; Amato (2006).

5 Marrou (1956) 318–332; Cribiore (2001), (2007); Van Dam (2002) 167.

6 Simelidis (2009) 25; Wilson (1996).

7 Simelidis (2009) 25; Wilson (1996) 8.

8 Socrates was of the opinion that Christians cannot obey Christ’s injunctions to test everything in order to hold on to what is good unless we “possess the weapons of our opponents”, by which he means Greek rhetoric, poetry, and philosophy (3.16.22). See Allen (1987) 372 for a discussion on Socrates’s views on Hellenic education.

9 Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 5.18 (ed. Bidez-Hansen); Wilson (1996) 10; Simelidis (2009) 26.

ὁ μέντοι τοῦ Βασιλείως νόμος, ὃς τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς Ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας μετέχειν ἐκώλυεν, τοὺς Ἀπολιναρίους, ὧν καὶ πρότερον ἐμνημονεύσαμεν, φανερωτέρους ἀπέδειξεν. ὥς γὰρ ἄμφω ἦσθην ἐπιστήμονες λόγων, ὁ μὲν πατὴρ γραμματικῶν, σοφιστικῶν δὲ ὁ υἱός, χρειώδεις ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς τὸν παρόντα καιρὸν τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς ἀπεδείκνυσεν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ εὐθύς, γραμματικὸς ἅτε τὴν τέχνην, γραμματικὴν Χριστιανικῶ τύπῳ συνέταττε, τὰ τε Μωυσέως βιβλία διὰ τοῦ ἡρωικοῦ λεγομένου μέτρου μετέβαλεν καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὴν παλαιὰν διαθήκην ἐν ἱστορίας τύπῳ συγγέγραπται. καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τῷ δακτυλικῷ μέτρῳ συνέταττε, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τῷ τῆς τραγωδίας τύπῳ δραματικῶς ἐξεργάζετο, καὶ παντὶ μέτρῳ ῥυθμικῶ ἐχρήτο, ὅπως ἂν μηδεὶς τρόπος τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώττης τοῖς χριστιανοῖς ἀνήκοος ᾖ. ὁ δὲ νεώτερος Ἀπολινάριος, εὖ πρὸς τὸ λέγειν παρεσκευασμένος, τὰ εὐαγγέλια καὶ τὰ ἀποστολικά δόγματα ἐν τύπῳ διαλόγων ἐξέθετο καθὰ καὶ Πλάτων παρ’ Ἑλλήσιν.

moreover, is that Socrates said that the works of the Apollinarii were so poor that they might have never been written (3.16.17). Simelidis argues, moreover, that Gregory continued to write his classicizing poetry after Apollinarius was condemned as heretical.<sup>10</sup> Others, however, did not offer protest. For instance, we hear of Prohaeresius,<sup>11</sup> the Athenian rhetorician and Gregory's teacher of rhetoric, who resigned his position. More dramatically, there is the example of Hecebolius, Julian's Christian teacher at Constantinople who left Christianity; however, after the reign of Julian, Hecebolius returned to Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Gregory thoroughly rejected both stances, refusing to abandon classical learning or Christianity, and he rejoiced instead in reading his copy of the *Iliad* (*Ep.* 31.7). In *Oration* 4.5, Gregory attacked Julian and claimed that both culture and Hellenic identification belonged to Christians. This tension between Christian and Greek is apparent even in the terminology used by both Christians and non-Christians in so far as both adopt the term "Hellene" to refer to non-Christians (Gregory *Orat.* 4.5).<sup>13</sup> Gregory counters this claim, arguing that the Greek culture of the Hellene belongs to those who speak Greek, not necessarily those who engage in pagan practices.

Thus, when placed in their historical context, the views of Gregory and Basil on Homer can be understood in light of a larger project of uniting scriptural learning with classical education. Still, one can see upon an examination of the works of both authors, that Gregory and Basil were frequently conflicted in how much classical education should be appropriated and in what ways non-Christian writings could be adopted. For instance, in *Ep.* 2.2 – a fine

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Simelidis (2009) 26 points to John Zonaras's (12th century) *Epitome Historion* (p.61.13–62.4 Büttner-Wobst), where Zonaras links Gregory's poems, for instance, and Apollinaris' Metaphrasis Psalmorum with Julian's edict. Simelidis points in particular to the sentence: "ὅθεν τῶν παίδων τῶν χριστιανύμων εἰργομένων μετιέναι τοὺς ποιητάς ὁ Ἀπολινάριος λέγεται εἰς τὴν τοῦ Ψαλτηρίου ὀρμηθῆναι παράφρασιν καὶ ὁ μέγας ἐν θεολογίᾳ Γρηγόριος εἰς τὴν ποιήσιν τῶν ἐπῶν, ἵν' ἀντὶ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν μαθημάτων ταῦτα οἱ νέοι μανθάνοντες τὴν τε γλῶσσαν ἐξελληνίζωνται καὶ τὰ μέτρα διδάσκωνται" to show that Gregory and Apollinaris wrote poetry because of the edict. On Gregory and this edict, see Bowersock (1990) 11–12 and Van Dam (2002) 195–199.

10 Simelidis (2009) 27.

11 For a brief discussion of Gregory's training under Prohaeresius, who taught a traditional classical curriculum indistinguishable from that of his Hellenic contemporaries, see Mountford (2005) 177–179.

12 Prohaeresius: *Eunapius. Vitae sophistarum* 493, Jerome *Chronicon* s.a. 363. Apollinarius: Socrates *HE* 3.16; Sozomen *HE* 5.18. Julian *EP* 19. See Van Dam (2002) 196.

13 On early Christian apologists and their use of "Hellene", see Athanassiadi and Frede (1999a) 6–7 and Van Dam (2002) 196. Van Dam shows that Julian calls the Christians "Galileans" in an attempt to marginalize them and make them sound like a regional sect. Van Dam (2002) 199.

example because it shows the unity of thought between the two authors – Basil writes to Gregory that in order to embrace the ascetic life, he must separate himself from classical learning; for classical learning is knowledge derived from man, whereas the ascetic life requires divine teaching. Basil's pronouncement carried weight because of his training in classical education, including subjects such as philosophy, astronomy, geometry, and medicine studied in Capadocia, Constantinople, and Athens.<sup>14</sup> It is clear that in many of his writings, Basil sees a classical education as a foundation possibly beneficial to the study of scripture; thus, he exhibits a somewhat different stance from Gregory, who does not see one as a necessary precursor to another. Instead, Gregory uses Homeric poems to enlighten and enliven his writings on scripture.

## 2 Gregory and Homeric Interpretation

In addition to his theological and rhetorical works, Gregory wrote approximately 17, 000 verses<sup>15</sup> of poetry primarily in hexameters in the Homeric and Callimachean tradition, distichs like Theognis, and trimeters, like Euripides.<sup>16</sup> These poems were penned in his final years on his country estate in Arianzus, after his resignation from the second Ecumenical council in 381 CE.<sup>17</sup> While these poems are largely unknown today, the Byzantine reception of the poems was quite widespread and it appears that they were part of the school curriculum.<sup>18</sup> Select poems are of particular interest to this study on his reception of Homeric poetry for several reasons. In his discussion of why Hellenic poetry should be read by Christians, Gregory makes frequent references to Homeric meter in order to highlight his own Hellenic education,

14 Kustas (1981).

15 The poems are divided in Migne into two books, the *Theological Poems* (subdivided into 38 dogmatic and 40 moral poems); and *Historical Poems* (99 poems concerning himself, and 8 poems concerning others.) The verses consist of a wide-range of genres; they include didactic memory verses for young children, epigrams written as ascetical exercises; private prayers; and a large body of theological poems. This article will concentrate on the poems referencing Homer or Homeric epic; for Gregory's use of Callimachus, see Faulkner (2010) 78–87; see also Sykes (1985) 433–437.

16 Demoen (1993) 238; on Gregory's meter, see Agosti and Gonnelli (2001) 289–434.

17 Demoen (1993) 238. McGuckin fits the Gregorys' poetry writing into the larger story of his life, providing a great deal of political and social background to the poems (2001) 371–398.

18 See Simelidis (2009) 7. Simelidis points to the sixteenth century reception as evidence that the poems were widely read; Aldus Manutius' 1504 edition of Gregory's *Carmina* predated the *editiones principes* of Plato (1513), Pindar (1513), and Aeschylus (1518). There is no modern critical edition of these poems. On the autobiographical poems, see White (1996).

thus underscoring how his own interpretation of Homeric myth illuminates Christian theology. Thus, Homeric exegesis found in Gregory's poems shows how Gregory fits into the larger story of Greek *paideia*.

In a poem dedicated to his verses, *Eἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα* (11, 1, 39[1329–36]), Gregory gives among several reasons for why he uses verse for theological topics:

Even in the field of letters  
I cannot bear the idea that outsiders would surpass us;  
I mean those varnished letters,  
Even if beauty for us is situated in mystic vision  
(vv. 48–51) trans. DEMOEN<sup>19</sup>

Here, Gregory cites as one of his reasons for writing verse a desire for Christians to take part in the significant genre of verse writing which had been dominated by Hellenes. In his poem on his own life Gregory writes in the dedication that verse-making is pleasant as a medicine for low spirits and, by sugaring the pill of instruction for young people, it makes sermonizing enjoyable for the listener (lines 6–7). This kind of “sugaring the pill” is also seen in *Poem* 11.2.5, one example of Gregory's Christian exegesis of Homeric poetry for a didactic purpose. In this epistolary poem “From Nicobulus to His Son”, one of two poems dealing with the education of his great-nephew Nicobulus (11, 2, 4 and 5), Gregory interprets the magic potions given to Odysseus and Helen in the *Odyssey* as *logos* and *mythos*:

I know that the drug of Hermes (who escorts the souls of the dead)  
was the *logos*. He gave it as a present to the son of Laertes  
on his way to Circe, in order that he might help his friends,  
changed into swine, and avoid to eat himself swine fodder.  
It was the *mythos* as well with the Egyptian Polydamna, Thon's wife,  
mixed; she gave it to Helen as a noble host's gift,  
banishing sorrow and anger, causing all evil to be forgotten.  
(11. 2, 5, vv. 196–202) (*PG* 37, 1535–6)<sup>20</sup>

19 Demoen (1993) 239.

... οὐδ' ἐν λόγοις  
Πλέον διδωμι τοὺς ξένους ἡμῶν ἔχειν·  
Τούτοις λέγω δὴ τοῖς κεχρωσμένοις λόγοις  
Εἰ καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἡμῖν ἐν θεωρίᾳ.

20 Translation and reference found in Demoen (1993) 242. Compare with *Od.* 10.275–308 (the meeting of Hermes and Ulysses) and *Od.* 4.220–32.  
Οἶδα δὲ Πομποῦ

For Gregory, the *logos* represents the pagan *paideia* and the *mythos* represents something akin to pagan *logoi*, particularly in these epistolary poems.<sup>21</sup> While the two are used synonymously, for the most part, it seems that the subtle difference lies in understanding that *mythos* refers explicitly to the fictitious story which can be read allegorically, while *logos* refers to the whole of pagan *paideia*.<sup>22</sup> Gregory finds fault in such myths, which can lead the reader astray. In *Or.* 39.3 (*PG* 36, 337A), Gregory says that myths are problematic because if they are true, they should be taught as true stories; if they are false, they should not be treated with abundant interest.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Gregory's position on Hellenic *logoi* is somewhat conflicted. On the one hand, he finds a dedication to classical areas of study, including rhetoric, history, grammar, logic, ethics, and literature of great importance (*Letter to Nicobulus*, vv. 59–76); yet this importance is always secondary to the Christian truth (*logos*).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in *Εἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα* Gregory offers, among his reasons why he wrote verse, that while beauty lies in Christian *theoria*, the ξένοι should not be better skilled in ἐν λόγοις ... τοῖς κεχρωσμένοις λόγοις (vv. 54–7). Christos

Φάρμακον, ὡς λόγος ἦεν, ὃν ἐρχομένῳ μετὰ Κίρκην  
 Λαρτιάδῃ πόρε δῶρον ὅπως κε σύεσσιν ἀρήξει  
 οἷος ἐτάροις, μηδ' αὐτὸς ἔδοι συοθρέμμονα φορβήν.  
 Μῦθον καὶ Πολύδαμνα κεράσσατο, θῶνος ἄκοιτις,  
 Αἰγυπτιῇ, δῶκεν δ' Ἑλένη ξεινήϊον ἐσθλόν, νηπενθές τ', ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων.

21 Demoen (1996) 213.

22 Demoen (1996) chapter III, particularly 219.

23 "Α γὰρ ὡς ἀληθὴ προσκυνοῦσιν, ὡς μυθικὰ συγκαλύπτουσιν· δέον, εἰ μὲν ἀληθῆ, μὴ μύθους ὀνομάζεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅτι μὴ αἰσχυρὰ δεῖκνυσθαι· εἰ δὲ ψευδῆ, μὴ θαυμάζεσθαι, μὴ δ' οὕτως ἰταμῶς ἐναντιωτάτας ἔχειν δόξας περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγματος.

24 II, 1, 1 vv. 96–100 (*PG* 37, 977) = II, 2, 7 vv. 43–7 (*PG* 37, 1554):

The fame that goes with letters was the only thing that absorbed me.  
 East and West combined to procure me that, and Athens, the glory  
 Of Greece.

I labored much for a long time in the craft of letters; but even these two  
 I laid prostrate before the feet of Christ

In subjection to the Word of the great God. Trans. Demoen (1993) 236.

Μοῦνον ἔμοι φίλον ἔσκε λόγων κλέος, οὓς συνάγειραν

ἀντολίῃ τε δούσις τε καὶ Ἑλλάδος εὖχος Ἀθῆναι. τοῖς ἔπι πόλλ' ἐμόγησα πολὺν χρόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῦς πρηνέας ἐν δαπέδῳ Χριστοῦ προπάροισεν ἔθνη καὶ ἱζαντας μέγαλοιο θεοῦ λόγῳ.

Translation Demoen (1993) 236. Cf. Camelot (1966) 23–30. Van Dam (2002) 199 discusses the various meanings of the word *logos* for Gregory as he sets them out in his *First Oration*; *logos* can refer to the oration, as a sacrifice of gratitude to God; *logoi* can also refer to the words used to honor Christ. In the context of his arguments in the poems, it is likely that *logos* refers to culture; hence, Gregory accuses Julian of his crime against *logoi*, culture. Van Dam notes that Gregory plays on the *logos* of "reason", culture, and Christ, in so far as Christ, the *Logos*, is the fulfillment of reason and culture.



Simelidis points to this reason as rooted in the fact that Christian literary texts were in scant supply and that apart from the study of the Psalms, pagan books remained the basis of the school curriculum.<sup>25</sup> In his autobiographical poem 11, 11, Gregory describes his own education in rhetoric in Alexandria and Athens where he took courses with Basil and Julian. In this poem, Gregory refers to his passion for letters (*logoi*) which he sought to use for the service of Christian truth.<sup>26</sup> In his poem *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* Gregory compares Greek and Christian understandings of virtue and comes to the following conclusion regarding those Greeks who can be called wise because they value virtue. In vv. 214–7, he urges the Christian reader to learn the best from the faithless just as one might pick roses among thorns. This sentiment is also found in the *Funeral Oration to Basil* (11), where Gregory urges Christians not to disregard the principles of enquiry and speculation that can be garnered from Hellenic literature.<sup>27</sup> Gregory says that such principles have aided Christians in their perception of the contrast between what is worse and better and enabled them to gain strength from their wrong teaching. In *Or.* 43.11, Gregory says that Christians have adopted from non-Christian usage principles of speculation, but have rejected those things which lead the Christian to perdition (*PG* 36: 508B–509A; ed. Bernardi, 136–40.) What comes next in this discussion, however, is pivotal to Gregory's reading of Homer: he says that by reading non-Christian "culture", which some Christians scorn, he has drawn profit for piety and learned to distinguish the better from the worse. By any weakness in the text, moreover, Gregory argues, the Christian doctrine can be made stronger. In his *Orations*, however, Gregory places Greek myth in the category of Greek error; for instance, in his *Oration on the Holy Lights* (*Or.* 39) Gregory says that fables hide unhappy minds. Gregory then goes on to describe the myths and practices of the Greeks as they worship their gods, such as those found in Homer and Euripides, in particular.<sup>28</sup>

The extent to which Gregory does, in fact, use Homeric texts is seen not only in his employment of Homeric myth and imagery, but even in Homeric words and stock phrases, slightly altered in his poetry. These words and phrases are

25 Simmelidis (2009) 25. See also Mango (2002a) 103 who states that Christianity had no literary culture appropriate for schooling.

26 "When the first down grew on my cheeks a keen passion for letters (*logoi*) took possession of me. Moreover, I sought to turn bastard letters into the service of those that are genuine." Trans. Demoen (1993) 237.

27 Norris (2000) 141 says, speaking of Gregory's *Funeral Oration to Basil*, that Gregory Christianized Hellenism rather than Hellenizing Christianity by seeing rhetoric as the helpmate of theology.

28 *Oration* 39, III. 3–10 (*PG* 36 337).

altered to fit the Christian context. For instance, Alan Cameron<sup>29</sup> notes that in Gregory's *Carm.* 11.2.7.[1571] 253, 5, Gregory uses an ironic oracle to bring to mind Hellenic oracles as he depicts Apollo's announcement that he has been destroyed by Christ. Simelidis adds that in the last lines of the fictitious oracle, Gregory creates a variant of the Homeric epithetic for the gods: he uses οὐκέτ' ἐόντων in place of the Homeric formula αἰὲν ἐόντων (*Od.* 3.147; 4.583).<sup>30</sup> In addition to formulae, Gregory's use of language also displays Christian contextualization of Homeric language.<sup>31</sup> For instance, Simelidis points to the Homeric hapax of ὑπερμενέων, where no verb ὑπερμενέω exists, from *Od.* 19.62: καὶ δέπα, ἔνθεν ἄρ' ἄνδρες ὑπερμενέοντες ἔπινον ("exceedingly might" *LSJ*). He shows that the word is found nowhere else in Greek literature apart from Gregory's *Carm.* 11.1.1.409–410 (ed. Tuilier-Bady) to describe the Pharisee. In this way, it is meant to parallel Homer's use of the term with reference to the suitors in *Od.* 19.62.<sup>32</sup> In *Carm.* 1.2.17, lines 7–8, Gregory uses "καθαροῖν ... κτεάτεσσιν", "property earned by honest means", as an echo of the Homeric formula, κτεάτεσσιν ἐοῖς (*Od.* 1.218; 1.430; 14.115, 452; 15.483).<sup>33</sup> In addition, Gregory also copies large sections of Homeric poetry, for instance the whole of *Od.* 4.221 in *carm.* 11.2.5.[1356] 202).<sup>34</sup> This borrowing imitates the tendency among the Hellenistic poets, particularly Callimachus, for copying lines or sections of Homer in their own verse. Thus, Gregory copies Homeric style, and by doing so, he mimics a trend found among the Hellenistic poets, thus identifying with a tradition of Greek poetry.

It is noteworthy, as well, that Gregory makes frequent references to Homeric poetry throughout his *Poemata Arcana*, a collection of eight theological poems written in hexameter, including: "On First Principles," "On the Son," "On the Spirit," "On the Universe," "On Providence," "On Rational Natures," "On the Soul," "On the Testaments", and "The Coming of Christ." Here, Gregory appropriates the genre of hexameter poetry to Christian theology, with the result that, when he does allude to Homeric poetry, he does so without mentioning Homer himself or explicit myths from the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. He does, however,

29 Cameron (1969) 240–241; noted by Simelidis (2009) 33.

30 Simelidis (2009) 33; Simelidis also points to the same Homeric formula at the end of the verse and in *Gr. Naz. Carm.* 11.2.7 [1557]88. See also Demoen (1996) 226 n. 67.

31 See Simelidis (2009) 47–49 for instances of problematic words or expressions, as well as a listing of rare words or expressions. In particular, see Simelidis' lengthy discussion of Homeric *hapax legomena* used by Hellenistic poets, including ἄβροτος, "holy", found once in Homer, at *Il.* 14.78 and *Od.* 11.330. This word occurs again only twice before Gregory. Gregory, however, uses it in *Carm.* 1.2.14.35 (ed. Domiter) to describe conception.

32 Simelidis (2009) 52.

33 Simelidis (2009) 130.

34 Simelidis (2009) 53.

use extended similes taken from Homer,<sup>35</sup> as well as epic vocabulary.<sup>36</sup> For instance, in *Arc.* 1.1, his use of *σχεδίη* refers back to the description of a flimsy raft in *Od.* 5.33<sup>37</sup> and he uses the Homeric term *γεννήσιες* in *Arc.* 2.17.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the *Arcana*, Gregory inserts epic language and places the language in a different context in a way that does not recall the Homeric myth, but reminds the reader of elevated epic style.<sup>39</sup> Sykes draws parallels between imagery in the *Poemata Arcana* to Homeric poetry, including his invocation of the Holy Spirit at *Arc.* 1.22–5 in a way reminiscent of the calling of the muse in *Od.* 1.1–10.<sup>40</sup> For instance, in *Arc.* 6.3off, Gregory compares the difficulties of understanding the divine mysteries to crossing a turbulent river; one must proceed ahead with the crossing, despite realization midstream of the danger. His description of being *ἐξαπίνης ἀνέπαλτο* “suddenly swept out of one’s depth,” as Sykes translates it, seems to parallel *Il.* 23.694, where a fish leaps and suddenly disappears.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Gregory uses a rainbow in the beginning of the sixth poem, *Car.* 1.1.7.1ff using the phrase *ἀκτὶς ἡελίου πολύχροον ἱρὶν ἐλίσσει*, referring to the refraction of light. This is a possible allusion to Homer’s use of *ἐλίσσέμεν*, in *Il.* 23.309 for the rounding of the post in a chariot race.

Gregory also uses a Homeric simile for the rhetorical purpose of encomium to his friend in the *Funeral Oration to Basil*. For instance, he uses Homeric diction to describe how Basil hurled syllogisms when he argued against his enemy (43.17).<sup>42</sup> This Homeric language both underscores Gregory’s own education in Homeric poetry and emphasizes the learning of his friend who defeated his enemies at their own rhetorical art.

### 3 Basil on Homeric Literature

That Basil was certainly well-schooled in Hellenic thought comes as no surprise; nor are we surprised to hear that Basil “drank at deep wells and was refreshed”, although the water was “not always sweet” (*Ep.* 1.3). In his treatise *Πρὸς τοὺς νέους* Basil urges young men to take advantage of and learn from “the famous men of the ancients”, but to do so with discretion; by this, he means

35 Cf. Frangeskou (1985) 12–26.

36 C. Moreschini, Sykes, and Holford-Strevens (1997) 63; Frangeskou (1985) 12–26.

37 Moreschini, Sykes, and Holford-Strevens (1997) 78.

38 Moreschini, Sykes, and Holford-Strevens (1997) 99. Cf. Monro §94.2, p. 80.

39 Moreschini, Sykes, and Holford-Strevens (1997) 60.

40 Moreschini, Sykes, and Holford-Strevens (1997) 84.

41 Sykes (1979) 8.

42 Konstan (2000) 168.

one ought to accept what is useful and to disregard what ought to be overlooked. Rather than eschewing non-Christian teaching, Basil urges students to first engage with the Hellenic writers to prepare their minds so that they may better take in the sacred teachings of scripture, just as Moses and Daniel were trained in Egyptian teachings.<sup>43</sup> He says that in order for the soul to prepare for scripture, it must be trained first:

So we also must consider that a contest, the greatest of all contests, lies before us, for which we must do all things, and in preparation for it, must strive to the best of our power, and must associate with poets and writers of prose and orators and with all men from whom there is any prospect of benefit with reference to the care of our soul. Therefore, just as dyers first prepare by certain treatments whatever material is to receive the dye, and then apply the color, whether it be purple or some other hue, so we also in the same manner must first, if the glory of the good is to abide with us indelible for all time, be instructed these outside means, and then shall understand the sacred and mystical teachings; and like those who have become accustomed to seeing the reflection of the sun in water, so we shall direct our eyes to the light itself.<sup>44</sup>

II. 34–47

Basil likens Hellenic wisdom to the leaves that a tree wears alongside the beautiful fruit of the tree, which is the truth of revelation. Just as the foliage protects the fruit, so does Hellenic teaching prepare and protect the soul so that

43 On this treatise, see Wilson (1970) 68–77 and (1975). Of course, theological interpretation of Homeric poetry has a lengthy tradition. Wilson remarks that embarrassing passages of Homer led to the allegorical interpretation as early as Theagenes of Rhegion (c. 525BC). See Wilson (1975). Van Dam makes the point that Basil did not need to argue for the importance of scripture over classical learning because the goal Basil assumes is for young men to approach Christian letters. This is despite his mother's concerns about the damaging effects of allowing his daughter to read Homeric poetry. See Van Dam (2002) 182.

44 Translation by Deferrari (1934): καὶ ἡμῖν δὴ οὖν ἀγῶνα προκεῖσθαι πάντων ἀγῶνων μέγιστον νομίζειν χρέων, ὑπὲρ οὗ πάντα ποιητέον ἡμῖν καὶ πονητέον εἰς δύναμιν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦτου παρασκευήν, καὶ ποιηταῖς καὶ λογοποιοῖς καὶ ῥήτορσι καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλητέον, ὅθεν ἂν μέλλῃ πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ὠφέλειά τις ἔσεσθαι. ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ δευσοποιοὶ παρασκευασάσασα ντες πρότερον θεραπείαις τισὶν ὅ τι ποτ' ἂν ἦ τὸ δεξιόμενον τὴν βαφήν, οὕτω τὸ ἄνθος, ἐπάγουσιν, ἂν τε ἀλουργὸν ἂν τέ τι ἕτερον ἦ, τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τρόπον, εἰ μέλλει ἀνέκπλυτος ἡμῖν ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ παραμένειν δόξα, τοῖς ἔξω δὴ τοῦτοις προτελεσθέντες, τηνικαῦτα τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ ἀπορρηγῶν ἐπακουσόμεθα παιδεθμάτων· καὶ οἷον ἐν ὕδατι τὸν ἥλιον ὁρᾶν ἐθισθέντες, οὕτως αὐτῷ προσβαλοῦμεν τῷ φωτὶ τὰς ὀψεις. For introduction, text, and commentary, see Wilson (1975).

it may better take in Christian truth (III. 2ff.)<sup>45</sup> Basil specifies, moreover, that students should begin their instruction with the poets<sup>46</sup> because the subjects that they deal with are of every kind (IV. 5ff), but he warns that one should not pay attention to everything that they say but focus on the deeds or words of good men. When the poets discuss wicked men, Basil suggests that these men should not be imitated and the young should “stop up [their] ears no less than Odysseus did.”<sup>47</sup> Here, he advises young men to overlook the poets when they praise drunken or ill behavior, particularly all discussions of polytheism and the dissolute actions of the gods; for, “having appropriated from this literature what is suitable to us and akin to the truth, we will pass over the remainder.”<sup>48</sup> He gives analogies in VIII.1ff on this practice of garnering virtue from reading Homer, while rejecting harmful teachings: one should reject harmful teachings as one rejects harmful foods, the pilot steers his ship through harsh winds to harbor, the bowman shoots at a mark, and a craftsman strives for a proper end to his craft. Likewise, one should read Homer with virtue in mind, looking for the teachings which contribute to this end. Thus, by urging Christian readers to disregard the debaucheries of the gods, Basil continues in a tradition of philosophical interpretation of Homer,<sup>49</sup> led by Plato’s discussion of poetry in *Rep.* 377e–378e; 389e–390c, that says that the reader should not praise Homer when he offers depictions of their licentious behavior.

In his orations, Basil puts into practice his theory on reading Homer for instruction on virtue. For instance, using the story of Odysseus and the Phaeacians from *Odyssey* 6.135ff, Basil shows how one ought to allegorize Hellenic poetry in order to find the “hidden truth” in Homer’s poetry. In *Or.* 43, Basil explains that Nausicaa does not incur shame at the sight of the naked Odysseus on the shore because he “is clothed with virtue in place of garments” (v.7).<sup>50</sup> This passage is further allegorized so that naked Odysseus is honored by the Phaeacians who pay heed to virtue, not possessions, such as clothing.

45 This is also a reference to Plutarch, *How to Study Poetry* 28D–E. Here, Plutarch says that the *technē* of the author could excuse the depiction of untrue or inappropriate descriptions (Webb (2008) 66.) Basil also agrees with Plutarch’s teaching here, that one should emphasize the good examples in Homeric epic.

46 Van Dam argues that by placing the study of Hellenic literature as a prolegomena to Christian scripture, Basil effectively demotes classical learning. See Van Dam (2002) 182.

47 Basil *Address to Young Men on Greek Literature* IV.2. The reference is to Homer, *Od.* 12.39ff.

48 Basil *Address to Young Men on Greek Literature* IV.8.

49 On the history of philosophical interpretation of Homer, see Lamberton (1986), (1992), and (2013).

50 This view of Homeric poetry is also seen in Horace’s *Epistles*, 1.2.1–4 and in the scholia on the *Iliad*. Wilson notes that this scholia there is an attempt to draw a moral lesson for each episode, particularly *Iliad* 1.193–4, 490–1, 512, 520, 523, 566, 611. Wilson (1975) 52.

For, Basil says, "Other possessions, in fact, belong to those who possess them no more than to whomever comes by merely by chance ...; but of all the possessions, only virtue cannot be taken away, as it remains with a man whether he is alive or dead." (v.9). This quotation has a parallel in the writings of Gregory, who finds the relationship of Odysseus and Nausicaa worth of allegory. In his poem *Παρθενίης ἔπαινος*, Gregory says that marriage has two advantages: "Χάρμα μέγ' εὐμενέεσσιν, ἄχος δέ τε δυσμενέεσσι" (I, 2, 2, vv. 172–6 (PG 37, 592). This phrase seems to be a copy from *Od.* 6.184–5, where Odysseus tells Nausicaa of his hopes for her to marry well.<sup>51</sup> Frequent minor allusions to Homeric poetry pepper Basil's *Orations*. For instance, in *Oration* 35, Basil quotes Homer, *Odyssey* 24.6–8 to describe the Arian teachings, and in *Oration* 15, he uses an extended metaphor from *Iliad* 2.308–19 to describe the mother of the Macabees.

In the correspondence of Basil, it is clear that Basil uses references to Homer primarily as a form of literary flourish; e.g., he compares his home in Pontus to the beauty of Calypso's island (*Ep.* XIV), and he harkens the deliciousness of cabbage (!) to the lotus of Homer (*Ep.* CLXXXVI); in one letter, to Aburgius, he asks for clemency on behalf of Maximus, the former governor of Capadoccia, unjustly accused of embezzlement (*Ep.* CXLVII). Basil compares the sufferings of Maximus to the calamities of Odysseus. This letter is interesting because it provides the reader with a sense of Basil's ability to interpret and apply Homeric myth.

In Libanius' letter to Basil (*Letter to Basil* CCCXLV), Libanius playfully accuses Basil of being superior to him in expository style; as part of this reprimand, he chastises Basil for not providing an exposition of two passages of Homer which he apparently had asked him to explain.<sup>52</sup> The passages are meant to evoke Basil's superiority in style over Libanius, and both have to do with glory. He points to *Iliad* 7.81ff where Hector speaks of the glory that will come to him and to *Iliad* 19.172ff, where Odysseus advises Agamemnon to make peace with Achilles by returning Briseis. While the subtext of this letter is rhetoric, the fact that Libanius can assume that Basil would not be ridiculous making an interpretation of Homer, shows that this is perhaps an activity that one might assume is appropriate or customary for Basil.

<sup>51</sup> Demoen (1993) 243.

<sup>52</sup> Πολλάκις ἐν Στρατηγίῳ σοι συγγενόμενος ἡβουλήθην διὰ τῆς σῆς σοφίας εἰς τὸ βάθος τῆς Ὀμήρου μανίας εἰσελθεῖν. «Εἰ δὲ τὸ πᾶν οὐ δυνατὸν, σὺ δὲ ἄλλ' εἰς μέρος ἡμᾶς εἰσάγαγε τοῦ κλήρου.» Μέρους δὲ ἐπεθύμουν ἐν ᾧ, τῶν Ἑλλήνων κακῶς πεπραχότων, ὃν ὕβριζεν Ἀγαμέμνων θεραπεύει δῶροις (*Ep.* CCCXLV. 23–27 Deferrari).

#### 4 Conclusion

The argument has been made that Gregory accepts and appreciates Hellenic material more so than Basil, who teaches Christians to read their Hellenic counterparts with caution.<sup>53</sup> However, based on the ways in which both use Homer, it appears that Gregory and Basil quote lines from Homer or make references to Homeric words, meter, or imagery in their epistles, orations, and treatises – which is to say, in a full range of their writings. Perhaps one could argue that when Basil and Gregory make short and frequent references to Homer in their writing, they are doing so to impress the reader with their intellect and education. This method can be compared to a writer today quoting a line or two of Keats when writing a scholarly article on philosophy – this quotation is meant to enliven the article and to connect an educated writer to an educated reader and thus underscore the sharing of an intellectual bond. Such a quotation, however, is not meant as a greater statement on Keats. Similarly, when Basil and Gregory reference Homer, they are not making a statement on Greek religion.

However, when Gregory and Basil discuss the value of Homer, they do so with trepidation. We see that Gregory provides exegesis of Homeric poetry in a manner similar to that of Porphyry – breaking apart the *mythos* and *logos* of the poetry. Moreover, both Gregory, in the *Funeral Oration to Basil*, and Basil, in his *Treatise to Young Men*, urge Christians to read and learn from Hellenic teachings, such as Homer, insofar as the teachings support Christian truth. In this way, both Gregory and Basil are conflicted as to how much of Hellenism should be adopted and adapted by Christianity. Thus, rather than fighting for the ability to teach Homer under Julian, it may be that the greater problem for Gregory and Basil was how much access to Hellenic texts, such as Homer, the impressionable Christian should have available. In their writings, Gregory and Basil show that Christian teachers were, in fact, engaged in a great debate on how to control the flood of Hellenic learning so that Christians were in the world, but not of the world. For, according to Gregory and Basil, knowledge of Homer was valuable to young Christians as they took part in Greek life, but some of the content of Homer had the potential to damage Christians on a path to virtue.

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53 Norris (2000) 150; Konstan (2000) 167; Pelikan (1993) 17–20; Puech (1930) 17–20.

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# Numenius, Cronius, and Porphyry on Homer

*Robert Lamberton*

If the earliest surviving commentary on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* readily reveals its origins in the classroom,<sup>1</sup> the fragmentation of that tradition into various genres, motivated by a range of goals and projects, was already underway at such an early date that the history and details of that fragmentation remain obscure. The earliest even roughly datable, surviving discussion of the poems (that of Xenophanes) falls into the general category of philosophy, and the critic speaks as a thinker – and poet – who engages Homer as a rival, but Xenophanes in turn seems to have been not far removed in time from Theagenes of Rhegium, whom Porphyry represents as a literary scholar, or what we might call a literary critic.<sup>2</sup> These two strands of commentary on Homer – roughly, the philosophical and the literary – remain intertwined (like philosophy and rhetoric) throughout antiquity, and beyond. Their interdependence in the intellectual world of the Roman Empire, which at least superficially seems so much more accessible than that of archaic Greece, underlies the peculiar episode in the history of Homer-interpretation that culminates in Porphyry's essay on *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*.

## 1 Numenius and/or Cronius

Numenius of Apamea and Cronius belong to one of the obscure milieux that feed into what John Dillon called the “Platonic underworld” of the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Of Numenius we know little that is certain, and of Cronius, less.

To start with the more problematic figure, Cronius is seldom mentioned in isolation. Porphyry refers to him as a *hetairos* (“associate” or “companion”) of Numenius (*De ant.* 21) and includes him in a list of authors read in Plotinus’

1 The question/solution format of, for example, the collection of Homeric questions attributed to Aristotle, and widely attested in the scholia, may be taken as the foundation on which more complex modes of commentary rest.

2 On Theagenes, see the B scholion at *Il.* 20.67 (which may be from Porphyry: Schrader (1880–90) vol. 1, 240–3; cf. Theagenes, fr. 2 D-K) and on Xenophanes see frs. 10–16 D-K and Leshner (1992).

3 Dillon (1977) esp. ch. 8.

school (*Vit. Plot.* 20), and this last bit of information guarantees that his reputation was still considerable late in the third century CE. There is nothing to date his activity securely, but an individual of the same name was the dedicatee of Lucian's *Death of Peregrinus*, generally placed in or shortly after 165 CE.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Cronius was associated with Numenius does not help very much with dating the two, but a *floruit* in the late second century CE for each is generally accepted.

We have only a single title (περὶ παλιγγενεσίας or "On Reincarnation") attributed to Cronius,<sup>5</sup> but the testimonia give a strong sense of the sort of writer Cronius was and make it likely that he may have been an important contributor to what Porphyry describes as the interpretations of "Numenius and his companion Cronius" (*De ant.* 21). Porphyry remains the dominant, though not the unique, source of what we know of Cronius' intellectual commitments, and what we hear again and again is that he was an allegorist, and not an allegorist whose interpretations consistently inspired assent and praise from Porphyry. Particularly striking is a passage from Porphyry's essay on the Styx preserved in Stobaeus,<sup>6</sup> where, after conceding that the ancients "expressed matters concerning the gods and daemons through riddles (δι' αἰνιγμάτων)," he goes on to single out Cronius' hermeneutic efforts:

Τῶν οὖν ἀναπτύσσειν ἐπιχειρησάντων τὰ δι' ὑπονοίας παρ' αὐτῷ λεγόμενα ἱκανώτατα δοκῶν ὁ Πυθαγόρειος Κρόνιος τοῦτ' ἀπεργάσασθαι, ὅμως ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις ἄλλα τε ἐφαρμόζει ταῖς τεθείσαις ὑποθέσεσι, τὰ Ὁμήρου μὴ δυνάμενος, οὗ <τε τοῖς> παρὰ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τὰς δόξας, τοῖς δὲ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ προσάγειν τὸν ποιητὴν πεφιλοτίμηται.

PORPHYRY fr. 372F (SMITH)

Of those who have undertaken to develop and expound those things [Homer] expressed through secondary meanings (δι' ὑπονοίας), the Pythagorean Cronius gives the impression of having accomplished the task most ably, but on the whole he fits foreign material to the notions in question since he is unable to apply Homer's own, and he has not endeavored to accommodate his ideas to the poet's words but rather to accommodate the poet to his own ideas.

4 Whittaker (1994) 527.

5 From Nemesius of Emesa *De Natura hominis* pp. 34–5 Morani = Porphyry fr. 447F (Smith).

6 Cf. Lamberton (1986) 113.

This is perhaps the most substantial of the few texts that profess to indicate the nature of Cronius' activities. Both he and Numenius are most often identified as Pythagoreans, but it is difficult to be precise about the exact meaning of that term in the second century CE. A sympathetic reading might place them in the tradition described by Iamblichus and Porphyry a century later, with its emphasis on training and on community, combined with a highly developed sense of the multiple levels on which texts might be understood and the corresponding disparity of capacities among the users of those texts. Viewed from this perspective, it makes a certain sense that second-century Pythagoreans should have been allegorists, emphasizing the multiple levels on which Homer or Plato could be read, and the appropriateness of those various levels to corresponding stages of education.<sup>7</sup> There is a considerable danger, though, that this sympathetic reading is simply a function of Iamblichus' and Porphyry's retrospective idealization of the Pythagoreans. Whether or not educational communities such as they describe ever existed, it is far from clear that they did so in the Roman Empire of the second century CE, and there is a corresponding unsympathetic reading of these second-century Pythagoreans that places them at the bombastic and theatrical end of the philosophical spectrum, practicing a diction and a lifestyle that was conceived to impress others with a seriousness and piety that had little substance. If any notion of the philosopher in the high Roman Empire was inseparable from pretentious (and sententious) charlatanry, it was that of the Pythagorean sage.<sup>8</sup>

Porphyry, as usual, balances as neatly as possible on the razor's edge that separates these ideas of the Pythagoreans. As will become clear later, he oscillates between a (perhaps reluctant) affirmation of the interpretive claims of Numenius and Cronius and the more skeptical attitude expressed in the Stobaeus fragment cited above, but then Porphyry projects such divided allegiances constantly and he was simultaneously a philosopher in the tradition of Plato and (as Dodds described Numenius, following Macrobius) *occultorum curiosior* ("rather too curious about hidden things").<sup>9</sup> It was relatively easy for

7 Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Way of Life* (along with the *Protrepticus*, which is a continuation of it) places considerable emphasis on the Pythagoreans as educators. Particularly relevant is ch. 23, on education through "symbols" requiring interpretation (ἑξήγησις). Cf. Delatte (1915) and Lamberton (1986) 318–324.

8 It is helpful to read Lucian's *Peregrinus* (though Peregrinus was not a Pythagorean) alongside Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana* to get a sense of the range of attitudes toward such philosophical figures. While Philostratus expresses (or affects) only praise for his subject, and Lucian only scorn for his, it seems clear that in the first and second centuries the Pythagorean sage was often a figure of fun. Porphyry himself mentions the mockery (χλευασμός) to which the later Pythagoreans were subject (*Vit. Pyth.* 53).

9 Dodds (1960) 11.

Joseph Bidez, a century ago, to paint a coherent picture of the evolution of Porphyry's relationship to religion and his own peculiar accommodation of religion to philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Today, with more material available to put into the analysis (and with a clearer light on the problems involved in identifying the authentic fragments of, for instance, the work against the Christians), it is more difficult to be certain just where Porphyry stood on such matters, and how his views may have evolved over time.<sup>11</sup>

There is, then, some reason to believe that, in the late second century CE, a Pythagorean milieu (or perhaps several) existed, in which allegorical interpretation was rampant. This seems in any case to be Porphyry's view, and Cronius is at the center of this development as Porphyry portrays it. If we have far more fragments and testimonia for the intellectual commitments of Numenius, they do not help a great deal in sorting out the issues that concern us. E.R. Dodds, half a century ago,<sup>12</sup> found the most substantial evidence for Numenius' thought to relate to theology, and he explored the fragments that throw light on his conception of three gods (two of which are in some sense "the same"). In terms of philosophical commitments, we in fact have far more evidence for what Numenius did not think than for what he did think. A large percentage of what is preserved comes from his history of the "divergence" of the Academy from Plato's own thought, and those fragments certainly provide evidence for his wit and skill at polemics, but they do not tell us much about his own commitments – not much, that is, beyond the fact that he ridicules the "sceptical" Academy. He emerges as one of the important spokesmen for a new, "dogmatic" Platonism, or at least a Platonism based on a Plato who *had* dogmas, and he did not embrace the Socratic claim of ignorance as the central hermeneutic and procedural principle of intellectual analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Of Numenius and Cronius, then, we can only say that they belong to a second-century Pythagorean milieu that may well be in large part a retrospective fantasy of the third century. They were remembered and studied in the school of Plotinus and, in subsequent centuries, in the schools of Iamblichus (who taught at Apamea and may have thought of Numenius as an intellectual predecessor) and that of the Athenian Platonists of the late fourth to the sixth century. By then, Numenius seems to have been remembered as the more

10 Bidez (1913).

11 See von Harnack (1916) and Ramos Jurado *et al.* (2006) and the most recent comprehensive study of Porphyry, Johnson (2013).

12 Dodds (1960).

13 See frs. 24 to 28 des Places, which are all from the account of Numenius' work *περί τῆς τῶν Ἀκαδημαϊκῶν πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαστάσεως* ("The Disagreement Between the Academics and Plato") in Eusebius' *Preparatio evangelica* XIV.

important philosopher, but in any case, when these last polytheist Platonists fell silent, little was heard of Numenius and Cronius until this tradition of thought was revived by Ficino and the Renaissance.

## 2 Porphyry

As we have already seen, Porphyry is among the authors who refer most often to Numenius and Cronius,<sup>14</sup> and he does so most often in the context of allegorical interpretation.

Before turning to the essay on *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*, however, it will be helpful to step back and consider the larger picture of Porphyry's relationship to Homer. Unlike the shadowy second-century Pythagoreans, Porphyry is a figure about whom we know a great deal,<sup>15</sup> much of it revealed incidentally in his own *Life of Plotinus*. The self-portrait of the author that emerges from that biography is first of all that of a scholar. His respect for sources is meticulous. He is concerned that his reader should know precisely how he came by each piece of information he provides, and this confers on the biography an exceptional sense of lucidity and credibility.

Of himself, he tells us that he was born in about 233 CE (or rather, that he joined Plotinus' school in the tenth year of the reign of Gallienus (or 262–3), at which point he was 30 and his teacher 59).<sup>16</sup> Eunapius adds the information that he was born in Tyre. He came to Rome from Athens, where he had studied for an unknown period with Longinus and evidently acquired expertise in rhetoric and literature as well as philosophy. He soon became the literary executor of Plotinus and it is in this role that he presents himself to the reader of the *Life*.<sup>17</sup> It is very striking that the two figures who are most responsible for the strong association of Platonic philosophy with allegory in the Roman Empire – Porphyry and Proclus – are also remarkable for the depth of their rhetorical (or literary) studies.

14 In des Places' collection of the fragments, the most important witness for Numenius is Eusebius (twenty-five fragments) followed by Proclus with nine fragments and Porphyry with eight.

15 See Bidez (1913) and Johnson (2013), esp. 15–21. For a different perspective from my own on the issues under consideration here, see Heath (2013) esp. 134–137.

16 *Vit. Plot.* 4.

17 *Vit. Plot.* 7.



He left Rome for Sicily (for medical reasons and on Plotinus' advice, assuming we can believe his own testimony<sup>18</sup>) after six years, and two years thereafter (in 270) Plotinus died. Porphyry apparently completed the editing of his teacher's work (which he divided for numerological reasons into six "nines" or *Enneads*) in the first decade of the fourth century, but it remains unclear how long he lived on into that century and where (or even if) he himself taught philosophy in his later years. He was in any case extremely productive and influential, largely in areas that had nothing to do with literature or with allegory.<sup>19</sup>

Porphyry seems to have studied and published on Homer both as a philologist and as a philosopher, something that appears odd to modern eyes. In fact, our own compartmentalization of these activities – those of the literary scholar and those of the philosopher – no doubt emphasizes distinctions that looked quite different to Porphyry. In the list of 75 titles and categories of works adopted by Andrew Smith as the organizing principle of his edition of the fragments of Porphyry, six are grouped under the rubric "Homerica." Of these, two are titles only (preserved in the *Suda*), and the works have entirely disappeared, but their titles are striking: *The Usefulness of Homer for Kings*, and *Homer's Philosophy*. The former has the ring of a Plutarchan title, while variations on the latter title are attested for several ancient thinkers including Porphyry's teacher Longinus<sup>20</sup> and would appear to attest to Porphyry's having attributed at least a consistent view of the world to Homer. Two others (including *The Styx*, mentioned above) are represented exclusively by fragments preserved in Stobaeus), and of the remaining two, *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey* is preserved largely intact, while only the first book of the *Homeric Questions* survives as a unit, though a great deal of the rest is preserved in the scholia to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>21</sup>

This material seems to fall, then into two categories: the purely philological (*Homeric Questions*), confined to consideration of rather unambitious, isolated issues, and at the other extreme, both the lost works (to judge by their titles),

18 The anecdote is in *Vit. Plot.* 11, and has been seriously questioned. Saffrey (1992) sees the departure of Porphyry from Rome as the result of philosophical disagreements between himself and Plotinus. See Barnes (2003) xi n. 9.

19 Porphyry's *Introduction* to the *Categories* of Aristotle may be the most widely read, translated, and explicated philosophical text of Late Antiquity (see Barnes [2003]). Also very widely read was his polemical text against the Christians (see von Harnack [1916]), itself preserved only in fragments and responsible for the loss of many of his other writings publicly burned by the Christians. See Johnson (2013) 47–49.

20 Männlein-Robert (2001) 97, 101–102.

21 Schrader (1880–90) and Sodano (1970).

*The Cave of the Nymphs* and, very likely, *The Styx*.<sup>22</sup> Both of the latter essays engage issues of meaning at a very high level of generalization. Both rely on (and criticize) the second-century Pythagoreans, and the *Essay on the Cave of the Nymphs* introduces a holistic view of the Homeric poems and their meaning that, from our perspective at least, seems entirely new in the history of the interpretation of the epics.

### 2.1 *The Homeric Questions*

The *Homeric Questions* belongs to one of the traditions of Homeric interpretation that feed into the scholia of medieval manuscripts. Hartmut Erbse, the editor of the *Iliad* scholia, recognized the collection as representing “die vollständigste und in vielen Fällen die ursprünglichste Testimoniensammlung zu den später so übel verstümmelten Scholien.”<sup>23</sup> Porphyry’s collection, then, is one of the links in the chain of transmission of the sort of material the scholiasts chose to include: solutions of familiar questions and a range of philological and mythographic conjecture. It is striking that a number of the fragments of the collection of Homeric problems and solutions attributed to Aristotle reach us by way of Porphyry’s collection, and Gigon reasonably conjectured that Porphyry may have had a copy of the Aristotelian *Homeric Problems* at his disposal.<sup>24</sup>

There is, in any case, little here that is original and a great deal that serves to display the traditional erudition of Porphyry. He clearly knew the literature of Homeric commentary, with its origins in the schoolroom, extremely well, and attempts have been made to portion out Porphyry’s Homeric scholarship to different periods of his career. The *Homeric Questions* would then be placed confidently in an “early” phase, close to his time with Longinus and decidedly previous to his exposure to Plotinus.<sup>25</sup> Different in tone and ambition as the *Homeric Questions* and the *Cave* essay and *The Styx* may be, however, not only are they compatible with one another, but there is actually some area of overlap.

To take just one example, the Porphyry of the *Homeric Questions* includes a lengthy discourse on Calchas’ prophecy in *Iliad* 2 (305–29).<sup>26</sup> It is not at all sur-

22 Johnson (2013), esp. pp. 31–37, has made an important attempt to reconstruct *The Styx* based on the fragments and makes a strong case for the essay having been close in structure and development to the essay on the *Cave*. The next question would then be whether these essays can be seen as indications of the content of *Homer’s Philosophy*.

23 Erbse (1960) 76.

24 Gigon (1987) 526.

25 Lamberton (1986) 108–114; Johnson (2013) 17–18.

26 Schrader (1880–1890) 1, 32–6; MacPhail (2011) 44–49.

prising that this was a passage that attracted the attention of Porphyry (again, *occultorum curiosior*), because it presents a puzzle. The elements of what the army, in Odysseus' narrative, observed (the snake, the eight nestling sparrows and their mother caught and devoured, then the clincher, demonstrating the ominous force of the event: the petrification of the snake [Il. 2.305–20]) are immediately followed by Calchas' interpretation (Il. 2.323–9) and his prophecy that Troy will be taken in the tenth year. What *is* perhaps surprising is that Aristotle is invoked as setting at least the agenda for this discussion.<sup>27</sup> It is probable, however, that the fragment of Aristotle's *Homeric Problems* should be taken as ending with the statement of the problem, given that the subsequent discussion invokes other authors (beginning with “those who have written on bird-augury [οἰωνιστικῇ] in Homer”) and refers back to Aristotle's claims to compare those claims with those of others.<sup>28</sup> The catalogue of conflicting and complementary interpretations would seem to be Porphyry's, and is at any rate consistent with his practice in the longer essays in the interpretation of Homer. It is difficult to draw clear conclusions from material of this sort, but we can say with certainty that, in the *Homeric Questions* as elsewhere, when a passage offers any basis for belief that the screen of the fiction is obscurely communicating some hidden reality, Porphyry leaps on that passage and explores a range of possible correspondences. The other striking fact is that in this example Porphyry is telling his reader that interpretation on this level is both traditional and routine, rooted in a hermeneutic of Homeric poetry that goes back at least to Aristotle.

## 2.2 *The Styx*

In the introduction to the surviving first book of the *Homeric Questions*, Porphyry specifies that this work is a sort of “preliminary training” for the Homeric “contests,”<sup>29</sup> and that he will put off “larger treatises” to a more appropriate place.<sup>30</sup> Of the “larger treatises” we have one example, the *Essay on the Cave of the Nymphs*, largely intact, and another, *The Styx*, represented by only a few fragments.<sup>31</sup>

27 Rose (1886) (fr. 145) gave Aristotle only the first twenty lines of the Porphyrian scholion, but Gigon (1987) less plausibly gives another page of the passage to Aristotle. In fact, it is very difficult to say where Porphyry's citation of Aristotle ends, and the transmission of the material further obscures the matter. See MacPhail (2011) 45, n. 30.

28 E.g., “According to Aristotle, the petrification of the snake displayed the slowness and hardness of the war, but according to others...” Schrader (1880–90) 1, 34. lines 25–7.

29 Sodano (1970) 1. 22–8.

30 Lamberton (1986) 109.

31 Smith (1993) frs. 372–80.

Smith placed *The Styx* in the “Homerica” and Johnson has reconstructed it,<sup>32</sup> but it remains unclear whether its relationship to the text of Homer was quite so straightforward as that of the *Cave* essay, which is an explication, with many digressions, of a single Homeric passage.<sup>33</sup> It is clear, however, that Homer’s accounts of the underworld were central to Porphyry’s essay on the Styx, and although other authors are cited (as they are in the *Cave* essay), the Homeric evidence is clearly privileged. But not enough remains to allow a clear answer to the question whether the essay was about one or more Homeric passages (with digressions) or rather focused on the issue of the “true” identity of the Styx of the poets as it appears in various localities in the real world, from Arcadia to India. The essay contained, in any case, an attempt to articulate the contribution of Homer to a larger conception of the hierarchy of souls, *daimones*, and gods, along with the structure of the universe in which these coexist. The most substantial and most Homeric of the fragments makes this clear, and what Porphyry seems to be doing here is assembling from various parts of the poems bits of information that contribute to a synthetic account of Homer on the fate of souls.<sup>34</sup> Further fragments make it clear that material from the *Odyssey* Nekuia was also brought in to this project<sup>35</sup> – and if such an account were the core program of Porphyry’s essay, we would certainly expect that the Nekuia would be the central text to be explicated. And yet Stobaeus adds to the reader’s frustration by breaking off the fragment, just where Porphyry most interestingly engages the Nekuia, with an apology on Porphyry’s part for including this material in the first place: “While all of this is full of an abundance of wisdom about the gods (θεοσοφία), we pass it over lightly since this is not the matter before us, but it has been necessary to bring it in for the sake of the explanation of the Styx.”<sup>36</sup> It would seem, then, that this essay, although it may have contained material relevant to *The Philosophy of Homer*, had its focus exactly where we would expect it based on the title given by Stobaeus – though it would be very helpful from our point of view to know just what the criticism of Cronius had to do with it.<sup>37</sup>

32 See n. 22 above.

33 Cf. Johnson (2013) 312 n. 10.

34 Fr. 377F Smith.

35 Frs. 373F and 378F Smith.

36 Fr. 378F Smith, lines 50–3: ὧν πάντων πολλῆς θεοσοφίας γεμόντων ἡμεῖς ἐπιτρέχομεν διὰ τὸ μὴ νῦν περὶ τούτων εἶναι τὴν πρόθεσιν, χάριν δὲ καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν Στύγα ἐξηγήσεως ἀναγκαίως παρειλήφθαι.

37 Fr. 372F (Smith), see above, p. 391.

### 2.3 *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*

Classical Greek literature is not rich in texts about texts, and diffuse as Porphyry's essay on *Odyssey* 13.102–12 is, it nevertheless begins by displaying those eleven lines and posing the question of their meaning (or the meaning of the cave they describe). This is a new phenomenon and incidentally brings into focus the odd fact that it is difficult to point to any earlier Greek texts that present as their entire *raison d'être* the explication of earlier texts. It is also a phenomenon very much tied to the developments in Greek literature in the second century (though their beginnings may be seen in the first) that we are accustomed to call the "Second Sophistic," ranging from the beginnings of belles-lettristic criticism in Dio Chrysostom to Galen intensely interrogating the meaning of words and passages in the Hippocratic corpus.

Immediately after posing his initial question – "[You ask, ... ,] what on earth the cave in Ithaca means for Homer – the one he describes in the following words ..."<sup>38</sup> – Porphyry introduces Cronius as a representative of the position that the description of the cave is entirely a poetic fiction (chs. 2–3),<sup>39</sup> creating a foil for his own presentation of the evidence from the geographers that this is simply not the case (ch. 4). The voices of Porphyry and Cronius are not easily separated in these opening chapters, and the catalogue of puzzling or seemingly contradictory elements in Homer's description may well go back in large part to the unnamed text of Cronius that Porphyry is citing or paraphrasing. The emphasis, in any case, is on the paradoxical nature of the description, on its superficial incoherence and implausibility, which force the reader to ask a certain number of questions and to seek answers that will restore coherence to the text.

Porphyry begins this project on a surprisingly high level of generalization. The ancients, we are told, consecrated caves to the Cosmos, making the earth itself a "symbol" (σύμβολον) of matter (ch. 5) and caves symbols both of the Cosmos and of "all the invisible [encosmic] powers" (ch. 7).<sup>40</sup> The term "symbol" is something relatively new in a literary-critical context and it occurs here repeatedly,<sup>41</sup> as if it were very much at home and could comfortably refer to any element in a text that could represent or stand for something other than itself.

38 The opening sentence seems to lack a governing verb. The conjecture above is Nauck's: [Ἐζήτησας, ὦ...], ὅτι ποτὲ αἰνίττεται Ὀμήρῳ τὸ ἐν Ἰθάκῃ ἄντρον, ὃ διὰ τῶν ἐπῶν τούτων διαγράφει λέγων.... Porph. *De ant.* 1, 1–2 (with n.) Nauck.

39 Porphyry may have used similar strategies in *The Styx*. Cf. Johnson (2012) 32–34.

40 Struck (2004) 71–75.

41 Struck (2004) 23 and passim. Struck's is the most recent study of this term, taking into consideration the background of the term and its eventual incorporation into the vocabulary of literary criticism.

It is nevertheless what Aristotle would call a *πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον*, a term used in more than one sense and whose meaning is not straightforward (if it were, then we could establish a neat correspondence with its referent, what it means “normally” or “primarily”, *κυρίως*). Consider the first claims made by Porphyry (above), which seem to cover a range of possibilities, some cultic and some not. To say that caves were for the ancients symbols of the Cosmos and of “all the invisible powers” is to use the term much as Iamblichus used it in describing the role of such things in theurgy. The gods have planted in the universe such “symbols,” which have a natural affinity with the various manifestations of the divine, and cultic manipulation of this sort of symbol allows informed humans to realize a special relationship with the divine.<sup>42</sup> This is essentially the sense in which the term “symbol” is used in theurgic contexts and this use is difficult to differentiate clearly from another, also illustrated above, where earth is said to be a “symbol” of matter (*ὑλη*). What the two statements have in common is that one thing is said to represent another, but the latter cannot be confused with a statement about cult, simply because matter has no cult, and if “earth” stands for “matter” it must do so by a sort of metonymy. Matter is an abstraction, and earth can stand for that abstraction, as a representative and striking material instance,<sup>43</sup> but this is a rather different matter from the “symbols” of theurgy. If these tensions exist in Porphyry’s use of the term, they are indicative of the fact that the word already, in the second century CE, had become a very general semiotic term, available to designate symbolic (or representational) relationships of more than one sort.<sup>44</sup>

This is in fact the real fascination of the *Cave* essay: Porphyry’s insistence on patterns of reference within the Homeric passage that elevate that passage to a privileged status, both for the light it throws on the rest of the Troy tale and for its elucidation of what Porphyry would claim were Homer’s metaphysics and cosmology.

After elaborating on some of the instances of cave cults and their symbolism, Porphyry ups the ante with a further claim (ch. 9). Caves (for the theologians)<sup>45</sup>

42 Iamblichus was a younger contemporary of Porphyry, with whom he engaged in a public debate on theurgy, the most important surviving document in which is the text known (since Ficino) as *De mysteriis*, where Iamblichus in answer to Porphyry (in the fragmentarily preserved *Letter to Anebo*) sets forth his position on these matters.

43 For elaboration of this theme, see Lamberton (1999).

44 This contrasts with the more familiar account of the development of the modern literary-critical term “symbol” as emerging from John Scotus Eriugena’s ninth-century translation of Ps.-Dionysius and taken up in the twelfth century by the School of Chartres. Cf. Lamberton (1986) 287.

45 The term *θεολόγος* for Porphyry, as for Aristotle, designates primarily the early Greek poets who literally “talked about gods” – primarily Homer and Hesiod for Aristotle, but

were symbols not only of the material Cosmos, but also of that which is perceived not by the senses but by the mind, the “noetic substance” (νοητὴ οὐσία). Porphyry is certainly capable of supporting conflicting claims, but here, it seems, a choice must be made. Homer’s cave of the Nymphs belongs in the first category. It is a symbol of the material Cosmos and this is guaranteed by the “eternally flowing waters” within it, as well as the Naiad Nymphs who frequent it, a term which, for the ancients, designated all the souls that are “descending into the realm of coming to be and passing away” (τὰς εἰς γένεσιν κατιούσας ψυχάς)<sup>46</sup> (ch. 10).

Porphyry then elaborates a series of examples of the symbolism of water and water-nymphs, making it clear that the dominant metaphor here is the sea of matter, and that the Nymphs (= brides) are the souls drawn into that sea. At this point (ch.10), it is Numenius who is cited for a few supporting examples (one, famously, from Genesis, another from Egyptian iconography) and once again one wonders just how much of this material is coming directly from the “Pythagoreans.”

When it is established that the cave is a dedication to the Nymphs (and so to souls entering “the realm of coming to be and passing away”), the elements of the description are again reviewed for confirming “symbols,” which are then explicated (chs. 13–19), culminating with a survey of the symbolism of honey (the cave contains “stone amphoras where bees store up honey”) and these turn out to provide the link between Nymphs (souls) descending and bees. “The ancients” used the name “bees” for descending souls “as workers of pleasure.” The imagery of the cave, then, is unexpectedly erotic. The Nymphs are souls, enticed by pleasure (sweetness, honey, sex) into this world, just as Ouranos was lured into this world by the prospect of intercourse and then castrated: “the theologian [Orpheus] saying (αἰνισσομένου) that the divine ones are ensnared by pleasure and drawn down ... and emit their powers as semen, when they are dissolved into pleasure.” (ch. 16).<sup>47</sup>

With the opening of ch. 20, we begin a recapitulation of sorts, going back to the issue of Homer’s cave – whether historical reality or poetic fabrication – and the claim that

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by Porphyry’s time, preeminently Orpheus (who was called ὁ θεολόγος in Imperial Greek much as Homer was called ὁ ποιητής).

46 The translation “realm of coming to be and passing away” for γένεσις may sound like Thomas Taylor for its diffuseness, but it has the advantage of emphasizing the contrast with its double here, the realm of (continuous and unchanging) being.

47 τοῦ θεολόγου δι’ ἡδονῆς δεσμεῖσθαι καὶ κατὰγεσθαι τὰ θεῖα εἰς γένεσιν αἰνισσομένου ἀποσπερματίζειν τε δυνάμεις εἰς τὴν ἡδονὴν ἐκλυθέντα. *De ant.* 16, 11–13.

δύο δέ τέ οἱ θύραι εἰσίν,  
 αἱ μὲν πρὸς Βορέαο καταβῆται ἀνθρώποισιν,  
 αἱ δ' αὖ πρὸς Νότου εἰσὶ θεώτεραι· οὐδέ τι κείνῃ  
 ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ὁδὸς ἐστίν.

*Od.* 13.109–12.

... [this cave has] two gates  
 the one toward the north a descent for humans,  
 but the one to the south is more divine, and by that path no  
 men enter, but it is a path for the immortals.

The first solution is attributed to “Numenius and Cronius” (ch. 21) and involves situating this “image and symbol” of the Cosmos within that context. Here it seems clear that virtually all the material – from astrology to Parmenides – comes from the Pythagoreans, and if Numenius is credited with making the connection to Parmenides, we must suspect that many of the specific links and connections made elsewhere in the essay come from him as well.

It is established that cold, northerly winds bring souls into this world, and warm, southerly ones ease their passage out of it, and a great deal of mythological and religious lore, much of it Mithraic, is mustered in support of this thesis (chs. 21–31). Porphyry observes that he could bring in much more lore “of the ancient philosophers and theologians” (ch. 31), but he announces that he will cut this short and return to the beginning of the quoted passage and to the “slender-leaved olive” of the first line of the passage he has quoted. This, we are told, planted at the “head” of the harbor, is the organizing principle of the description: the olive belongs to Athena and “Athena is wisdom” (φρόνησις δὲ ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ ch. 32). She, it seems, exerts over the passage the providential care that the gods exert over creation generally (of which the cave itself is a symbolic representation).

The closing chapters of the essay (34–36) evoke a reading of the entire Troy tale around this symbolic representation that is something new in terms of the reading of literature. Preserved earlier commentary (including the *Homeric Problems* of Porphyry) is largely a matter of clearing up thorny points, resolving contradictions and inconsistencies, elucidating obscure vocabulary. Here, however, the study of the details (which in this essay certainly runs the risk of pedantry in some of its catalogues of lore) has a payoff, and that surely identifies this as one of the “larger treatments.”

Porphyry’s language here mixes paraphrase and deliberate rewriting to convince the reader of what Homer is *really* saying:



Εἰς τοῦτο τοίνυν φησὶν Ὅμηρος δεῖν τὸ ἄντρον ἀποθέσθαι πᾶν τὸ ἔξωθεν κτῆμα, γυμνωθέντα δὲ καὶ προσαίτου σχῆμα περιθέμενον καὶ κάρψαντα τὸ σῶμα καὶ πᾶν περίττωμα ἀποβαλόντα καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἀποστραφέντα βουλευέσθαι μετὰ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, καθεζόμενον σὺν αὐτῇ ὑπὸ πυθμένα ἐλαίας, ὅπως τὰ ἐπίβουλα τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ πάθῃ πάντα περικόψῃ. οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ οἶμαι καὶ τοῖς περὶ Νουμένιον ἐδόκει Ὀδυσσεὺς εἰκόνα φέρειν Ὀμήρῳ κατὰ τὴν Ὀδύσειαν τοῦ διὰ τῆς ἐφεξῆς γενέσεως διερχομένου καὶ οὕτως ἀποκαθισταμένου εἰς τοὺς ἔξω παντὸς κλύδωνος καὶ θαλάσσης ἀπείρους.

*De ant.* 34

In this cave, Homer says, you must shed every external possession, and stripped naked and in the guise of a beggar, having wasted the body away and cast off everything that is superfluous and having turned away from sense-perception, take counsel with Athena, seated with her under the olive, about how to prune away the destructive passions from the soul. I do not think that Numenius and his associates were off the track in thinking that Odysseus in the *Odyssey* was for Homer an image of a man passing through the realm of coming to be and passing away and thus reestablishing himself among those beyond the sound of waves and ignorant of the sea.

The sea (of matter) becomes the dominant metaphor of the poem, a metaphor for life in the flesh, in the material world. The goal is stated in Tiresias' instructions in *Odyssey* 11.119–33, where he tells Odysseus to travel far from the sea until he is surrounded by people who do not recognize an oar. The Polyphemus episode constituted an attempt to leave the world of sense-perception by violence – a suicide – and this involved incurring the anger of the “gods of the sea and of matter” (i.e., Poseidon). Once that anger is resolved through the sacrifice Tiresias prescribes, the traveler will have reached his goal.

This procedure – the internalization of episodes of the narrative to become events occurring within the protagonist – has a strange affinity with Freudian analysis, whether of dreams or of texts. Odysseus, it seems, tried to commit suicide and so had a rough passage back to that place where “dry souls”<sup>48</sup> have their being apart from matter.<sup>49</sup> Porphyry's own suicidal depression, of

48 This essay (ch. 11) has one of many Imperial citations of the fragment of Heraclitus (fr. 68 Marcovich) “A dry soul is wisest” (ξηρά ψυχὴ σοφωτάτη).

49 A corrupt text obscures the details, but it seems likely that Porphyry “internalizes” as well Tiresias' instructions to Odysseus to travel inland until people can no longer recognize an

which he himself tells us (*Vit. Plot.* 11), is no doubt relevant to his reading of the *Odyssey*.

The conclusion, where Porphyry insists that “an interpretation of this sort should not be thought forced” (ch. 36) puts this *explication de texte* in the context of a reading of the entire Troy tale that surfaces repeatedly in references to Homer among the later Neoplatonists,<sup>50</sup> but is never spelled out as a continuous narrative. This reading starts with Helen, who represents the beauty of the material world<sup>51</sup> that entices souls to become embodied (an alternative explanation, if you like, to their attraction to the honey in the rock of the *Cave* essay). The dominant metaphor of the *Iliad* is war, representing the state into which souls fall, to do battle over that beauty. Some souls, however – those with a more developed affinity to mind (νοῦς) – emerge victorious and manage to return “home” across the sea of matter (the dominant metaphor, as we have seen, of the second poem).

### 3 Porphyry or the Pythagoreans?

Porphyry is the bearer of this reading of Homer and passes it on to the later Neoplatonic tradition where it thrives and grows, but there is little to suggest that he stands at its origin, although he certainly put his personal stamp on it. As meticulous about the sources of his knowledge here as in his life of Plotinus, he tells his reader repeatedly that Numenius and/or Cronius is responsible for a given reading and, finally for the larger notion of the meaning of the Troy tale to which the smaller meanings contribute. But we are still left with the question whether the earliest bearer of the Neoplatonists’ allegory of the Troy tale was himself an allegorist. Certainly, if we look at the range of his surviving commentary on Homer, allegory is not Porphyry’s characteristic mode of interpretation, even if what he is most remembered for in this area is his transmission of the allegories of Numenius and Cronius. While he repeatedly expresses doubts about the Pythagoreans’ allegories and distances himself from them, still he embraces and affirms them in the crucial passage near the end of the *Cave* essay (ch. 34, cited above) and repeats that affirmation, though without mentioning names, in ch. 36, in a closing flourish that seems to proclaim that this is indeed the *true* meaning of the poems.

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oar. In Porphyry’s paraphrase, it may well be Odysseus who no longer knows what an oar is, since he will have traveled beyond all knowledge of the sea of matter. Cf. Lamberton (1994) 40 with nn. 28, 29.

50 Lamberton (1986) 129–133; Lamberton (1992) 130–133.

51 Proclus, *In Rep.* 1.175.15–21; see Lamberton (1992) 131.

One thing that we would like to know, of course, is the nature of the texts in which Numenius and/or Cronius expressed these allegorical readings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but Porphyry is peculiarly silent on this matter and Porphyry is for all practical purposes our only source for them. He is also our source for the ὑπομνήματα (“treatises”?) of Cronius and Numenius having been read in Plotinus’ school (*Vit. Plot.* 14) and for the alleged dependence of Plotinus on Numenius. He mentions Numenius ten times and Cronius three times in the *Life of Plotinus*, but neither is ever mentioned by Plotinus himself (as edited by Porphyry). So there is something strange about the patterns of citation of these two figures, and Porphyry is at the center of the mystery, but a mystery it remains.

What we *can* say about Porphyry’s essay is that it is esthetically appealing and shows every indication of being addressed to a broad, educated public. In this it differs significantly from later allegorical texts in the Platonic tradition, and particularly from Proclus’ explications of Homer in his *Commentary on the Republic*, where the audience is enjoined to secrecy and to keeping the readings from the “uninitiated.”<sup>52</sup> What this seems to indicate is that around the year 300 CE Homer was still a common cultural property of all Greek speakers (something he was not, a hundred and fifty years later, when education was largely in the control of Christians and their hermeneutics and their interpretive community prevailed). At the time when Porphyry wrote the *Cave* essay, it was still possible to appropriate Homer as witness to a range of world-views, and claims about the commitments of “Homer the Philosopher” could be made and refuted, reformulated and debated. What we see in the allegories put forward in Porphyry’s *Essay on the Cave of the Nymphs* is the appropriation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to support a Platonist metaphysics and a Platonist account of the embodiment and return of an immaterial soul to its origins. The obscure beginnings of this reading in the second century elude us, but as Porphyry passed it along, its resonances are heard until the end of polytheist Antiquity and again in the Renaissance.

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52 Proclus *In Rep.* 1.74.86, and esp. 205.

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# Allegory, Metaphysics, Theology: Homeric Reception in Athenian Neoplatonism

Anne Sheppard

## 1 Introduction

This chapter will be concerned with the reception of Homer by the Athenian school of later Neoplatonism, specifically Syrianus and his pupils, Proclus and Hermias. Sometime in the fourth century CE a Platonic school which regarded itself as the successor of Plato's Academy was established in Athens.<sup>1</sup> When Proclus arrived in Athens around 430<sup>2</sup> the school was under the direction of Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus. On Plutarch's death in 432 Proclus continued his studies with Syrianus until the latter's death in 437, at which point he in turn became head of the school, maintaining a busy programme of teaching and writing until his own death in 485.<sup>3</sup> Proclus' fellow-student, Hermias, returned to his native Alexandria to teach and his son Ammonius, who in turn studied with Proclus in Athens, became head of the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria around 470.<sup>4</sup> The surviving work attributed to Hermias, a commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, is largely a report of Syrianus' lectures<sup>5</sup> and presents the same approach to Homer as we find in Syrianus and Proclus. Syrianus, Proclus and Hermias were all well educated in rhetoric as we can see not only from Syrianus' surviving commentaries on Hermogenes<sup>6</sup> but also from Proclus'

1 See Glucker (1978) 306–315; Watts (2006) 89–91; di Branco (2006) 115–130; Luna and Segonds (2012) 1089–1090.

2 According to Marinus' *Life of Proclus* ch.12, Proclus was almost nineteen years old when he arrived in Athens, which gives a date at the end of 430 or the beginning of 431. See Proclus *Platonic Theology* 1 xiii.

3 See the account of Proclus' daily schedule in Marinus ch. 22.

4 Cf. Watts (2006) 208–209; Blank (2010) 654–655; Damascius *The Philosophical History* 54 and 56 (= Damascius *Vita Isidori* 119–22 and 124).

5 This was first argued by Praechter (1912). For a full recent discussion see Manolea (2004) 47–58.

6 Some scholars have been surprised that a Platonist philosopher wrote commentaries on rhetorical textbooks but there is no good reason to doubt that the Syrianus who wrote the commentaries on Hermogenes was the same person as the Athenian Neoplatonist philosopher: cf. Manolea (2004) 45–47.

use of language derived from the rhetorical tradition of literary criticism and from similar material in Hermias' *Phaedrus* commentary.<sup>7</sup> Both Syrianus and Hermias treat Homer as an authority in a way which reflects traditional attitudes to Homer while Proclus' discussion of the passages of Homer criticized by Plato in *Republic* 2 and 3 shows that he was familiar with the way in which Homeric 'problems' had been discussed throughout classical antiquity.<sup>8</sup> One traditional way of dealing with these problems was the practice of allegorical interpretation.<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, the Athenian Neoplatonists were happy to take up the interpretation of the *Odyssey* already found in Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.6.8 in which Odysseus' lengthy journey home was understood as the return of the soul to its true home in the intelligible world.<sup>10</sup> However, the distinctive feature of their approach to Homer is the way in which they sought to fit the Homeric gods into their own theology and metaphysics. They build on earlier allegory of the gods and develop metaphysical allegories in terms of Neoplatonic metaphysics which make it possible for them to claim that Homer and Plato are in agreement not only with each other but also with other authorities such as the Orphic poems and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Understanding this approach to Homer requires some understanding of later Neoplatonist metaphysics and exegesis in general. The next section of this chapter will therefore offer a short account of the metaphysical system of the Athenian Neoplatonists and of their general exegetical stance before moving to consider some examples of the use of Homer in their commentaries on Plato and Aristotle as well as the rather special case of Proclus' defence of Homer in his *Commentary on the Republic*. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of what we can learn from Proclus' own *Hymns* about his reception of Homer and a brief enquiry

7 Cf. Walsdorff (1927) 97–113; Bielmeier (1930) 91–94; Sheppard (1980) 86, 117–119, 124–129; Steel (2005); Sheppard (2017) 277–278.

8 Homer is treated as an authority by Syrianus in, for example, *In Hermogenem commentaria* I 4.16–22, 9.10–18, 14.23–15.1, II 7.1–7, 185.5–14, and *In Metaphysica commentaria* (hereafter *In Met.*) 75.27–34, and by Hermias in, for example, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia* (hereafter *In Phaedr.*) 26.18–25 Couvreur (= 28.18–24 Lucarini-Moreschini), 68.5–14 Couvreur (= 72.16–26 Lucarini-Moreschini), 69.9–13 Couvreur (= 73.22–27 Lucarini-Moreschini), 147.18–148.1 Couvreur (= 153.28–154.11 Lucarini-Moreschini) and 151.9–11 Couvreur (= 157.22–158.3 Lucarini-Moreschini). All these passages are discussed in some detail by Manolea (2004). Proclus' discussion of the 'deceitful dream' sent by Zeus to Agamemnon at the beginning of *Iliad* 2, in *In Platonis Rem Publicam commentarii* (hereafter *In Remp*) I 115.4–117.21, is a good example of the way in which he responds to the interpretative tradition; cf. on this Sheppard (1980) 58–62.

9 On the development of allegorical interpretation in antiquity see Pépin (1976), Lambertson (1986) and Struck (2004).

10 For an account of different versions of this allegory see Pépin (1982). Cf. also van den Berg (2001) 269–270.

into the question whether the Athenian Neoplatonist approach to Homer was maintained by subsequent Neoplatonists.

## 2 Later Neoplatonist Metaphysics and Exegesis

Plotinus' postulation of the three hypostases of the One, Intellect, and Soul, above and beyond the world of Nature and sense-experience, raised many questions which later Neoplatonists tried to answer. In particular, from the time of Iamblichus (c. 245–c. 325 CE) onwards the Neoplatonists attempted to solve the problem of how the higher hypostases are connected to those below them. They did this by elaborating the system more and more, postulating intermediate entities to bridge the gaps between metaphysical levels. Iamblichus had argued that at each level there was a triad of unparticipated, participated, and participant entities.<sup>11</sup> Moreover the divine henads were inserted between the One and Intellect, providing a link between the supreme First Principle and the next level of reality. These henads also offered a place in the system to which the traditional gods of Greek religion – and Homeric poetry – could be assigned.<sup>12</sup>

It is not necessary here to set out all the complexities of the later Neoplatonic metaphysical system as we find it in Proclus, particularly in the *Elements of Theology* and the *Platonic Theology*. However, two of its key features deserve attention as they are relevant to the allegorization of Homer. One is the belief in “chains” (*seirai*), extending throughout the system, and the other is the tendency to extreme philosophical realism. Talk of the Neoplatonic hypostases as “levels” suggests a picture of successive horizontal layers of reality. The metaphor of “chains”, itself partly derived from the “golden chain” of Homer, *Iliad* 8.19, suggests vertical lines running across the horizontal ones and is used by Proclus and others to indicate that at each level of reality there are entities which correspond to specific entities at higher and lower levels.<sup>13</sup> One particular application of this metaphor is of interest to us here, namely its use with reference to the gods. Thus, for the Athenian Neoplatonists, while the supreme Apollo or Aphrodite is a divine henad, as mentioned above, there are lower

11 The triad is set out clearly by Proclus in *Elements of Theology* (hereafter *ET*) proposition 24. For discussion of it, see Wallis (1995) 126–127 and, on triads more generally, 130–134.

12 See Proclus, *ET* propositions 113–65 with Dodds' comments in Dodds (1963) 257–9, and Wallis (1995) 146–151. The arguments of Dillon (1972) that the doctrine of henads goes back to Iamblichus have been widely accepted; see also Dillon (1993).

13 See Lévêque (1959) 33–52.



Apollo and lower Aphrodites at lower levels of the system.<sup>14</sup> This explains the connections particular individuals may have with particular gods: Marinus describes his teacher as belonging to “the chain of Hermes” which was identified with the “golden chain” (*Proclus* ch. 28). The notion of “chains” also opens up possibilities for allegorical interpretation in terms of different manifestations of gods at different levels in the system.<sup>15</sup>

The Neoplatonists were realists in the sense that they held that objects of thought must have independent existence, prior to our thinking of them.<sup>16</sup> The principle that “everything is in everything but according to its nature” (πάντα ἐν παντί, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἑκάστῳ), set out by Proclus in proposition 103 of his *Elements of Theology*, is of fundamental importance here.<sup>17</sup> This way of looking at the world leads quite naturally to an understanding of phenomena in the physical world as symbols of the corresponding entities at other levels. It thus fits very comfortably with another distinctive feature of later Neoplatonism, the theory and practice of theurgy.

The Athenian Neoplatonists followed Iamblichus not only in elaborating the Neoplatonic metaphysical system in the ways I have described but also in accepting theurgy as a means of making contact with the divine. For the theurgist, particular symbols (*symbola* or *synthēmata*) in the physical world can be used to make a ritual connection with divine powers. Proclus himself, in the surviving fragment of his work *On the Hieratic Art* (*De arte sacrificali*), uses a very clear example, of the heliotrope as a flower which is a symbol of the sun.<sup>18</sup> For Proclus allegorical interpretation of Homeric poetry is on a par with a theurgic understanding of the physical world and when he uses the word *symbolon* and its derivatives with reference to such poetry it has a more than literary significance.<sup>19</sup>

Consideration of the Athenian Neoplatonists’ approach to exegesis of all kinds offers another, complementary perspective on the background to

14 The details of Proclus’ metaphysical and theological system are helpfully tabulated in d’Hoine and Martijn (2017) 323–338; for Apollo and Aphrodite, see 326, the lists of gods corresponding to hypercosmic/divine souls and hypercosmic-encosmic souls, based on *Platonic Theology* (hereafter *PT*) VI.12 and VI.22.98.14–24.

15 See Lévêque (1959) 34–43 on the chain of Hermes and 61–75 on other divine chains mentioned by Proclus and cf. Gucker (1978) 306–315 on the ‘golden chain’ and the chain of Hermes as applied to the succession of philosophers in the Platonic tradition.

16 Cf. Wallis (1995) 124–126.

17 See also Dodds’ comments in Dodds (1963) 254.

18 See Bidez (1928) and cf. Struck (2004) 229–232 on the chain of the sun and the chain of the moon in Proclus.

19 See, e.g., Proclus, *In Remp.* I 131.6 and the discussion in Sheppard (1980) 145–161 and Struck (2004) 238–252; cf. also van Liefferinge (1999) 243–250.

their reception of Homer. The philosophical curriculum of the late antique Neoplatonic schools began with Aristotle before going on to focus on twelve key dialogues of Plato, starting with the *First Alcibiades* and finishing with the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*.<sup>20</sup> The surviving Platonic commentaries of Proclus, with one exception, are all concerned with dialogues read as part of that curriculum and all arise from Proclus' activity as a teacher. The exception, the work known as the *Commentary on the Republic*, is not a commentary but a collection of essays discussing different aspects of the dialogue, some of them again related to oral teaching.<sup>21</sup> The *Phaedrus* too formed part of the standard curriculum, and it was no doubt in that context that Syrianus gave the lectures on the dialogue from which Hermias' commentary derives, as mentioned above. When he comments on Plato, Proclus not only assumes that Plato's work forms a consistent unity, presenting a body of truths about the world as a whole, but also that it is in harmony with other authoritative texts such as the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and the Orphic poems. The same outlook is evident in Proclus' *Platonic Theology* which is presented as a discursive account of Proclus' metaphysical system but seeks to show that all aspects of that system can be found in the works of Plato.<sup>22</sup> In taking this approach Proclus explicitly follows Syrianus.<sup>23</sup> It is no accident that both philosophers are said to have written works on the *Agreement of Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato with the Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Hermias' commentary on the *Phaedrus* includes passages which reflect this all-inclusive approach. A particularly striking example is the lengthy commentary on the mention of Zeus as "the great leader" (ὁ μέγας ἡγεμῶν), the first of twelve gods, at *Phaedrus* 246E, at *In Phaedr.* 135.17–140.16 Couvreur (= 141.14–146.18 Lucarini-Moreschini), which uses Plato's *Timaeus*, Homer, and Orphic poetry to expound the text.<sup>25</sup> A little further on the same approach is taken at *In Phaedr.* 148.15–150.22 Couvreur (= 154.24–157.5 Lucarini-Moreschini) where Orphic theology is used in discussing the description of "real being" (ἡ οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα) as "without colour and without shape" (ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος) at *Phaedrus* 247C.

20 See the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* ch.26 and Proclus, *In Alcibiadem priorem Platonis* ch. 11.

21 Essays 1–5, 7, 8, 10–12, 14 and 15 belong together and may derive from a course of lectures; essay 6 derives from a special lecture given at the annual celebration of Plato's birthday within the school: see Sheppard (2013a).

22 Cf. Sheppard (2014), esp. 58–66.

23 See, for example, *PT* IV.16.48.19–22, cited by Saffrey (1992) 43–44.

24 Cf. Praechter (1926), Saffrey (1992).

25 Cf. Saffrey (1992) 43–44 and Manolea (2004) 167–175.

Harmonizing Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with Plato was a harder task and Syrianus is quite prepared to be critical of Aristotle, especially in his commentary on books M and N where he has to defend the Platonist theory of ideal numbers against Aristotle.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, here too we find the assumption that authoritative texts reflect the structure of the world and that the task of the exegete is to demonstrate how that is the case, assisted, if necessary, by allegorical interpretation.<sup>27</sup>

### 3 The Use of Homer in Commenting on Plato and Aristotle

The use of passages of Homer in the Platonic and Aristotelian commentaries of Syrianus, Proclus, and Hermias should be set against the background sketched in the previous section of this chapter. Particular passages recur, regularly interpreted in the same way. Many of these relate to the later Neoplatonic understanding of the Homeric gods while another set of passages refer to the Neoplatonist interpretation of the *Odyssey*.

The description of the jewelry made by Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18.401 – πόρπας τε γναμπτάς θ' ἔλικας κάλυκας τε καὶ ὄρμους ("brooches, curved spirals, buds and necklaces") – offers a good starting point for consideration of the way in which the Athenian Neoplatonists interpreted much of what Homer has to say about the gods. This line was interpreted by both Proclus and Syrianus as referring to forms in matter, fashioned by Hephaestus in his role as demiurge of the sensible world. Proclus uses this interpretation of the line several times. In his commentary on the *Timaeus* (*In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, (hereafter *In Tim.*) 11.69.27–70.31) he supports an argument for the spherical shape of the cosmos by referring to this line alongside two lines from Orphic poetry and Plato's remarks about shape in *Parmenides* 137D–E; he then goes on to use an allusion to the *Chaldaean Oracles* to contrast Hephaestus' activity with that of the Platonic demiurge in the *Timaeus*. He quotes the line again at *In Remp.* 1 141.14–15, in the middle of an allegorical interpretation of Hephaestus' role in the story of Ares and Aphrodite recounted by Homer in *Odyssey* 8.266–366 and criticized by Plato in *Republic* 3.390C. Here Proclus takes the line as indicating that Hephaestus models the forms beneath the moon, in the physical world. A fuller explanation is offered by Syrianus at *In Met.* 82.35–83.7. Syrianus quotes not only *Iliad* 18.401 but also the first half of the next line, 402, ἐν σπῆϊ γλαφυρῷ

26 See Syrianus, *In Met.* 112.28–30, 159.29–160.5 and other passages discussed by Dillon (2006) 11–20. On Syrianus' attitude to Aristotle more generally see Saffrey (1987).

27 See the texts discussed in Saffrey (1992) 41–42.

("in a hollow cave") and explains more fully that the jewels made by Hephaestus are the forms as they appear in matter, the "last images" (τελευταίας εικόνας) of the separate Platonic Forms. The same view of Hephaestus, with a reference to the same passage of Plato's *Parmenides* as in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary but without the quotation from *Iliad* 18, appears in Hermias, *In Phaedr.* 149.18–21 Couvreur (= 156.3–7 Lucarini-Moreschini) where Hephaestus is said to have been taught by the Cyclopes about the varied shapes of physical things.<sup>28</sup>

Proclus also mentions Hephaestus' role in the story of Ares and Aphrodite in another passage of the *In Tim.*, at 11.27.16–28.7, where he interprets Hephaestus' binding of the adulterous couple as indicating the god's role in binding together opposites in the physical world. Hephaestus is mentioned again at *In Tim.* 1 142.14–144.18 where Plato's mention of Hephaestus at *Timaeus* 23E1 leads Proclus to offer an extended account of the god's place in late Neoplatonic metaphysics and theology, appealing to the Orphic myth of the mirror of Dionysus as well as using the term *ergotechnitēs* ("craft-worker") borrowed from the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>29</sup>

Another allusion to the role of Hephaestus as demiurge of the sensible world appears at *In Remp.* 1 136.30–137.2 in the middle of a lengthy allegorical interpretation of the deception of Zeus by Hera and their union on Mount Ida recounted in *Iliad* 14.153–351. This was one of the passages of Homer criticized by Plato in the *Republic*, 3.390B–C, and defended in various ways by subsequent interpreters.<sup>30</sup> Proclus states explicitly, at *In Remp.* 1 133.5–7, that his own discussion draws on a monograph by Syrianus devoted to this episode.<sup>31</sup> He explains in some detail how mythical divine marriages and procreation should be understood (1 133.19–134.7) and then expounds how Zeus and Hera in particular fit in to the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. As gods involved in the formation of the world they correspond to the couples Ouranos and Gē, Cronus and Rhea at higher levels. Hera is responsible for the procession and multiplication of lower orders of being, Zeus for their reversion and unification, and their union is the return of the lower power, Hera, to the higher power, Zeus.<sup>32</sup> The *thalamos* ("chamber") made by Hephaestus, to which Hera

28 Cf. Sheppard (1980) 68 and Manolea (2004) 211–214.

29 Cf. also *PT* VI.22.97.15–17 and the further references given in Saffrey and Westerink's note on that passage in Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97) VI.177.

30 For pre-Neoplatonic interpretations of the passage see Buffière (1956) 106–113 and 328–330.

31 Cf. Sheppard (1980) 44. Proclus also alludes briefly to this allegory at *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* (hereafter *In Parm.*) 1225.13.

32 "Procession" and "reversion" are technical terms of Neoplatonic metaphysics: all things "proceed" from the higher entities which are their causes and ultimately from the One, and are capable of "reverting" or returning to those causes.

goes in *Iliad* 14.166–7, is interpreted by Proclus as the ordering of the universe and the sensible world. It is contrasted with Mount Ida, where the union of the two gods takes place in the Homeric story. As “the place of Ideas” (τὸν τῶν ἰδεῶν τόπον, *In Remp.* 1 136.19) Mount Ida is at a higher level than the *thalamos* made by Hephaestus.

The phrase used in *Iliad* 14.296, φίλους λήθοντε τοκῆας (“escaping the notice of their dear parents”) is interpreted by Hermias at *In Phaedr.* 41.14–20 Couvreur (= 44.10–16 Lucarini-Moreschini) in the same way as in Proclus<sup>33</sup> while another passage of Hermias’ commentary, 77.16–78.5 Couvreur (= 82.18–83.4 Lucarini-Moreschini), contains etymologies of a very similar kind to the etymology of Mount Ida which we find in Proclus. In the latter passage Hermias develops an allegorical account of the Trojan War as a whole according to which Troy is to be understood as the region of matter and the Trojans as the forms in matter and irrational souls that spend their time involved with material bodies while the Greeks are rational souls and Greece from which they come is the intelligible world. Helen stands for intelligible beauty and Hermias cites *Iliad* 5.451–2, which refers to the Greeks and Trojans fighting over an *eidōlon*, an “image”, as indicating that the two sides were fighting over the emanation (*aporroia*) of intelligible beauty that appears in matter.<sup>34</sup> It seems likely that both Proclus and Hermias are reflecting a large-scale allegory of the *Iliad* and the Trojan War expounded by Syrianus in his monograph.

Proclus also deals with the union of Zeus and Hera in his commentary on the *Cratylus* (*In Platonis Cratylum commentaria* (hereafter *In Crat.*) 92.26–93.22), quoting *Iliad* 14.328 and then 213 as well as *Iliad* 1.547. This time he describes Zeus as the demiurgic intellect, the source of lower minds, and Hera as the source of all classes of souls.<sup>35</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the development of extended allegory in terms of late Neoplatonic metaphysics was Syrianus’ distinctive contribution to the long tradition of allegorical interpretation.<sup>36</sup> Such allegory needs to be understood within the wider context of Neoplatonic philosophy and exegesis sketched at the beginning of this chapter. For Syrianus and his pupils, Zeus, Hera, and Hephaestus have specific roles within a larger

33 Cf. Manolea (2004) 128–129.

34 With Hermias’ description of the Greeks fighting *περὶ ἀπορροίας κάλλους* (“about an emanation of beauty”) cf. Plato’s mention of τοῦ κάλλους τὴν ἀπορροήν (“the effluence of beauty”) at *Phaedrus* 251B1–2. For further discussion of these passages of Proclus and Hermias see Sheppard (1980) 62–68, Lamberton (1986) 208–213, Manolea (2004) 149–156.

35 Cf. also, with Duvick (2007) 168, *PT* v.23.86.1–19. I now think that I was wrong, in Sheppard (1980) 74, to regard this interpretation of Zeus and Hera as different from that offered in the *In Remp.*; it is the same interpretation presented from a different angle.

36 Sheppard (1980) 47–85.

scheme which for them explained both the physical world and mental life. It would appear quite natural to them to interpret material relating to these gods, both in Homer and elsewhere, in terms of that scheme and to put passages of Homer together with passages of Plato, the Orphic poems, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides* offers a further example of the way in which he uses allegorical interpretation of the Homeric gods in the course of commenting on Plato, and a further parallel with Hermias and Syrianus. At *In Parm.* 1036.24–1038.30 Proclus is discussing *Parmenides* 137B–C where Parmenides suggests that the youngest of his interlocutors is the one who ought to answer his questions. Proclus interprets the four interlocutors, Zeno, Socrates, Pythodorus, and Aristoteles, as entities at different metaphysical levels. Aristoteles, the youngest, is at the lowest level, that of a soul which can be led up to higher levels and then down again into the material world. Proclus draws a parallel with the levels of initiation in mystic rites and compares Parmenides' wish for a short rest while his questions are being answered with the unwearied and providential nature of the gods. He then alludes to *Iliad* 4.2–4, where the gods are served nectar by Hebe, as illustrating that unwearied and providential nature. The same lines from *Iliad* 4 are quoted in full by Hermias at *In Phaedr.* 156.30–3 Couvreur (= 163.29–32 Lucarini-Moreschini) and the gods feasting on nectar is there interpreted in the same way, as indicating divine providence. The connection of nectar with providence is repeated by Syrianus at *In Met.* 42.2–4. In the passage from the *Parmenides* commentary Proclus goes on to interpret Aristoteles' readiness to identify himself as the youngest of Parmenides' interlocutors as an example of the way in which souls and lower-level gods particularize the generic intellection of higher divine beings. He supports this allegorical exegesis by offering a parallel allegory of *Iliad* 24.74–7 where Hera asks for one of the gods to call Thetis to her and the call is answered by Iris. According to Proclus, both Iris' responding to Thetis in Homer and Aristoteles' responding to Parmenides in Plato are to be understood as allegories of relationships between entities at different levels.<sup>37</sup>

The passages considered so far have all involved allegories of the Homeric gods in one way or another. I turn now to another set of passages which make use of the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Odyssey* in terms of the return of the soul. At *In Parm.* 1025.25–8 Proclus alludes to the harbour in Ithaca to which the Phaeacians deliver the returning Odysseus in *Odyssey* 13.101. For him this is the "paternal harbour" mentioned in the *Chaldaean Oracles* which we

37 On this passage of the *In Parm.* cf. Sheppard (2014) 70–71; on the interpretation of nectar by Hermias and Syrianus cf. Manolea (2004) 187–189.

reach when we become united with the divine Intellect. A little further on, at *In Parm.* 1029.29–1030.5, Proclus notes that, just as Odysseus does not want to leave Ithaca again after his return, so Parmenides in the dialogue is reluctant to descend from intuitive intellection to discursive reasoning.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in the prologue to his commentary on Euclid Proclus understands Odysseus as the intellectual faculty of *dianoia* (“understanding”), liberated by Hermes from the Calypso of *phantasia* (“imagination”) and enabled to return to a higher intellectual level (*In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii* 55.18–23; cf. *Odyssey* 5.55–147).<sup>39</sup>

A more extended version of this allegory of Odysseus appears in Hermias, at *In Phaedr.* 214.4–24 Couvreur (= 224.8–225.2 Lucarini-Moreschini). Here Hermias is commenting on *Phaedrus* 259A–B where the singing of cicadas in the midday heat is compared to the song of the Sirens. Socrates there declares that rather than falling asleep, bewitched by the singing, he and Phaedrus should continue their philosophical discussion “sailing past” (παραπλέοντας) the danger. Plato in the *Phaedrus* is alluding to *Odyssey* 12.142–200 where Odysseus, following Circe’s instructions, sails safely past the Sirens. Hermias takes the opportunity to connect the Sirens with some of the other dangers from which Odysseus had to escape in order to return to Ithaca – Circe, the Cyclopes and Calypso – interpreting all of them as impediments to the return of the soul. He presents this overall allegory of the *Odyssey* as parallel to the allegory of the *Iliad* in terms of the soul’s battle to free itself from matter and attributes both allegories to “those who have interpreted the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in a more theoretical way” (οἱ θεωρητικότερον ... ἐξηγησάμενοι τὴν Ἰλιάδα καὶ τὴν Ὀδυσσεΐαν).<sup>40</sup> This allegory of the *Iliad* is the one expounded more fully at *In Phaedr.* 77.16–78.5 Couvreur (= 82.18–83.4 Lucarini-Moreschini), discussed above. While its origins predate Neoplatonism, the version of it used by Hermias and derived from Syrianus interprets many details of the epics in terms of later Neoplatonic metaphysics.

Hermias’ interpretation of the Sirens reappears in two passages of Proclus’ commentary on the *Republic*, one from the thirteenth essay, the other from the sixteenth. The thirteenth essay is concerned with the speech of the Muses in *Republic* 8.546A–547A. Towards the end of that essay Proclus offers an interpretation of the two harmonies mentioned at *Republic* 8.546C2. He assigns one of

38 For a list of passages in which Proclus uses the image of the “paternal harbour” see van den Berg (2000) 441–412. Proclus’ use of the image is discussed in both van den Berg (2000) and van den Berg (2001) 51–56.

39 See Beierwaltes (1975) 161, n.2 and Lambertson (1986) 224–225.

40 On this passage of Hermias, cf. Manolea (2004) 196–198.

these to the Muses and the other to the Sirens, explaining at *In Remp.* 11 68.3–16 that “some Sirens” (Σειρήνων ... τινων) preside over harmony within the world of becoming; one who wishes to ascend to the divine harmony of the Muses will sail past them (παραπλεύσεται), like Homer’s Odysseus and like Socrates and Phaedrus in *Phaedrus* 259A–B. The sixteenth essay of the *Republic* commentary is a commentary on the Myth of Er in *Republic* 10 where the Sirens appear at 617B4–7 in connection with the music of the spheres. In expounding that passage of Plato, at *In Remp.* 11 238.21–239.14, Proclus offers a fuller account of the Sirens and explains why the exegesis offered at *In Remp.* 11 68.3–16 applies only to “some Sirens”. In fact, according to Proclus in this passage from the sixteenth essay, Sirens exist at three different levels: the Sirens of *Republic* 10.617B are celestial Sirens, belonging to Zeus; the Sirens mentioned in the *Odyssey* and alluded to in Plato’s *Phaedrus* are terrestrial, belonging to Poseidon; a third class of subterrestrial or “hypochthonic” Sirens are the Sirens mentioned in Plato, *Cratylus* 403D7–404A7 as reluctant to leave Hades because they are bewitched by the wisdom of Pluto.<sup>41</sup> If we turn to the part of Proclus’ commentary on the *Cratylus* which deals with *Cratylus* 403D7–404A7, we find, as we might expect, that the three types of Sirens reappear, described in the same terms as in the sixteenth essay of the *Republic* commentary. (See *In Crat.* 88.14–26.) Once again Proclus connects the second type of Sirens with the world of becoming and alludes to *Phaedrus* 259A–B by using the verb παραπλέειν (“to sail past”) and once again he mentions the Homeric Odysseus.

Consideration of the Athenian Neoplatonists’ interpretation of the *Odyssey* has thus brought us back to their belief that Plato and Homer are in agreement and to a way of interpreting texts which deals with apparent contradictions by using the idea that different manifestations of the divine appear at different levels in the metaphysical hierarchy. Both this method of interpretation and the belief in the agreement of Plato and Homer are much in evidence in the extended defence of Homer found in the sixth essay of Proclus’ commentary on the *Republic* to which I now turn.

#### 4 Proclus’ Defence of Homer in the *Republic* Commentary

Any account of the reception of Homer by the Athenian Neoplatonists must make special mention of Proclus’ defence of Homer in this essay. Rather than simply using Homer as one of a number of authorities, alongside Plato, the

41 On Proclus’ view of the Sirens see Moro Tornese (2013) 123–126. Cf. also Lamberton (1986) 230–231.



Orphic poems, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Proclus here puts Homer in the foreground, endeavouring to reply to the criticisms levelled against many Homeric passages by Plato in *Republic* 2 and 3 as well as the more fundamental attack on mimetic poetry in general made in *Republic* 10. By late antiquity there was a long tradition of discussing these passages and of defending Homer by allegory and other means. Proclus treats the topic in depth and from more than one angle: not only does he follow Syrianus, as we have seen, in offering metaphysical allegories of episodes such as the union of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida, but he also puts forward a theory of inspired poetry, arguing that most of Homer's work is exempt from the criticisms of mimetic poetry found in *Republic* 10 since it is poetry of a different kind. It is not surprising that this essay by Proclus has attracted considerable attention from literary scholars and those concerned with the reception of Homer.<sup>42</sup>

Several passages from Proclus' essay have already been discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>43</sup> Like Plato before him, Proclus was particularly exercised by passages in Homer which describe the gods in all-too-human terms as making love, like Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida, or fighting, as they do in the Theomachy at the beginning of *Iliad* 20. However, the combination of Neoplatonic metaphysics with the tradition of allegorical interpretation offered Proclus a means of arguing that such passages, if rightly understood, have a meaning beyond what appears on the surface. It is entirely consistent with the exegetical approach Proclus learned from Syrianus that his discussion of the Theomachy in *Iliad* 20 is preceded by an account of the philosophical doctrines in terms of which all mythical theomachies are to be understood and that in the course of that account he alludes to the battle between Zeus and the Giants as well as the Orphic myth of the battle between the Titans and Dionysus. (See *In Remp.* 87.4–95.31.)<sup>44</sup> The detailed interpretations of the particular passages of Homer attacked by Plato in *Republic* 2 and 3 are preceded by a theoretical justification of allegorical interpretation (*In Remp.* 71.21–86.23) and followed by a more general discussion of Plato's view of Homer (*In Remp.* 154.14–177.3) which leads, at the end of the essay, to exposition of Proclus' striking theory of inspired poetry,

42 See, for example, Russell (1981) 66–67; Trimpi (1983) 200–219; Whitman (1987) 96–98; Bernard (1990) 35–50, 79–90, 96–102; Halliwell (2002) 323–334. For more detailed discussion see Sheppard (1980), Lamberton (1986) 180–232; Kuisma (1996); Rangos (1999); Struck (2004) 238–252. English translations of the text, with introduction and notes, are available in Lamberton (2012) and Baltzly, Finamore and Miles (2018).

43 See above pp. 413–414 on I 141.14–15 and pp. 414–415 on I 133.5–7, 133.19–134.7, 136.19 and 136.30–137.2.

44 For more detailed treatment of Proclus' interpretation of the Theomachy in *Iliad* 20 see Sheppard (1980) 49–58; Kuisma (1996) 107–109.

a theory which is used to defend Homer and to argue, ingeniously, that despite appearances Homeric poetry is not being rejected in its entirety in *Republic* 10 (*In Remp.* 1 177.7–205.23).

According to Proclus' theory there are three types of poetry – inspired, educational, and imitative – corresponding to three kinds of life in the soul. Inspired poetry, the highest type, corresponds to the kind of life in which the soul is united with the gods. Proclus describes it in terms borrowed from Plato's description of inspired poetry at *Phaedrus* 245A as “a madness better than sanity” (μανία σωφροσύνης κρείττων, *In Remp.* 1 178.24–5). This kind of poetry deals in symbols and requires allegorical interpretation. Proclus cites the binding of Ares and Aphrodite by Hephaestus, recounted in *Odyssey* 8, and the union of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida, recounted in *Iliad* 14, as examples of this kind of poetry (see *In Remp.* 193.10–16). The Theomachy of *Iliad* 20 would be another example.

Educational poetry corresponds to the kind of life in which the soul follows intellect and knowledge. The main characteristic of this type of poetry is the giving of moral advice and Proclus follows Plato, *Laws* 1.630A in regarding the poetry of Theognis and Tyrtaeus as falling into this category.<sup>45</sup> However, he thinks that Homer's work also contains examples of this kind of poetry, mentioning passages concerned with the nature of the soul as well as *Odyssey* 11.601–4 where a distinction is made between Heracles and his image (*eidōlon*) in the underworld and passages concerned with physical science and cosmology (*In Remp.* 1 186.22–187.24 and 193.4–9).<sup>46</sup> Imitative poetry, the lowest of Proclus' three types, is subdivided, following Plato, *Sophist* 235D–235C, into “eikastic” poetry, which aims to produce an accurate likeness of the thing imitated, and “phantastic”, which is concerned only to present an apparent likeness. Even imitative poetry does appear in Homer: passages in which Homer portrays the heroes fighting or holding counsel or speaking in accordance with their different types of character are “eikastic” poetry while the description of the sun as rising out of a lake in *Odyssey* 3.1–2 is a solitary example of “phantastic” poetry (*In Remp.* 192.21–193.4).

Proclus argues that the criticisms of poetry in *Republic* 10 are directed only at the lower division of imitative poetry, the “phantastic”, and that Plato is attacking Homer because of his influence on tragedy. As we have seen, although he finds examples in Homer of every one of his types of poetry, “phantastic”

45 Van den Berg (2014) argues persuasively that Proclus also regarded Hesiod's *Works and Days* as primarily consisting of this kind of poetry, while the *Theogony* would count as inspired poetry.

46 On the Neoplatonic understanding of *Odyssey* 11.601–4 see Pénin (1971).

poetry as defined by Proclus plays only a very small part in the epics. At *In Remp.* 199.14–28 Proclus claims that even when Homer is imitative that is not his main aim. He does his best to answer Plato's charge that Homer is neither educational nor politically useful and discusses the reasons why Plato attacked Homer so harshly in the *Republic*, drawing particular attention to the passages where Plato emphasizes Homer's influence on tragedy (*In Remp.* 200.4–205.23).

## 5 Proclus' *Hymns*

So far this chapter has been concerned with the way in which the Athenian Neoplatonists interpreted the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and with poetic theory. However, the Neoplatonists' Homer was also the author of the *Homeric Hymns* and any account of their reception of Homer needs to consider the *Hymns* which Proclus composed, using the metre and language of the *Homeric Hymns* to express the Neoplatonic view of the gods and his own poetic theory. Plato in *Republic* 10.607A had mentioned hymns to the gods and the praises of good men as the two categories of poetry which would be permitted even in the ideal state. Hymns would, therefore, be an entirely acceptable genre of poetry for a Platonist to write. In terms of Proclus' own theory, the *Hymns* would presumably qualify as inspired poetry and they do include some references to allegorical interpretation of the kind discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, in *Hymn* 6.10–12 Proclus expresses the wish to “escape from the evil of dark birth” (χυανέης ... φυγεῖν κακότητα γενέθλης) and asks the gods to whom the hymn is addressed<sup>47</sup> to “bring him near to the harbour of piety” (ὄρμον ἐς εὐσεβίης με πελάσσετε). This language recalls both the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Odyssey* and Proclus' concept of the “paternal harbour”.<sup>48</sup> In *Hymn* 5, addressed to Lycian Aphrodite, Proclus describes how the people of his native Lycia had erected a statue “with symbols of the intellectual marriage, the intellectual wedding of fiery Hephaestus and heavenly Aphrodite” (σύμβολ' ἔχον νοεροῖο γάμου, νοερῶν ὑμεναίων // Ἡφαίστου πυροέντος ἰδ' Οὐρανίης Ἀφροδίτης, *Hymn* 5.5–6), using language which clearly alludes to the Neoplatonic interpretation of this union.<sup>49</sup>

47 On the question of how many gods are addressed in *Hymn* 6, and their identification in Neoplatonic terms, see van den Berg (2001) 252–259.

48 See above pp. 416–417 and n.38. Cf. also *Hymn* 3.3 and 7.32, with the comments of van den Berg (2001) 211 and 303.

49 See van den Berg (2001) 244 and cf. above pp. 413–414 on Proclus' interpretation of Hephaestus and of Aphrodite's adultery with Ares.

There are seven surviving *Hymns* by Proclus although he probably wrote many more. The *Homeric Hymn to Ares* and the anonymous *Hymn to God* are also sometimes ascribed to him but the most recent editors and translators of Proclus' *Hymns* reject these ascriptions.<sup>50</sup> R.M. van den Berg has argued that for Proclus the singing of hymns was both a mode of philosophizing and a form of theurgy.<sup>51</sup> Certainly the *Hymns* are full of Neoplatonic language and many passages are best understood in terms of Neoplatonic theories and doctrines. At the same time they are composed in hexameter verse, using Homeric dialect. Homeric language and reminiscences are prominent in the first part of each *Hymn*:<sup>52</sup> a particularly striking example is *Hymn* 2.13 πᾶσιν δ' ἔργα μέμηλεν ἑρωτοτόχου Κυθερείης ("all care for the works of the goddess from Cythera who brings forth love") which almost exactly echoes *Homeric Hymn* 5.6 πᾶσιν δ' ἔργα μέμηλεν εὖστεφάνου Κυθερείης ("all care for the works of the goddess from Cythera with the lovely crown").<sup>53</sup>

Proclus' *Hymns* are thus very much the kind of poetry one might expect a Neoplatonist of the fifth century CE to write, conforming to his philosophical understanding of the Homeric gods and to his poetic theory while exhibiting the formal features of the genre of the *Homeric Hymns*.

## 6 Conclusion

We have seen that the Athenian Neoplatonists of late antiquity regarded Homer as an authority comparable to Plato and interpreted his work in a way which aimed to find as much agreement as possible between Homer, Plato, Orphic poetry, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. In doing so they took over and developed earlier allegories of both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, showing particular interest in the interpretation of Odysseus' return to Ithaca as the return of the soul to its true home and in allegories of the Homeric gods which placed them and their activities within the scheme of later Neoplatonic metaphysics. Their interest in Homer is not exclusively philosophical as we can see from their use of terminology derived from the rhetorical tradition of literary criticism

50 See Saffrey (1994) 75 and van den Berg (2001) 5–7.

51 See van den Berg (2001), esp. 13–34 and 86–111. Cf. also, with particular reference to *Hymn* 2, Erler (1987).

52 Cf. Saffrey (1994) 20. Vogt (1957) provides information regarding Proclus' use of the hexameter and of Homeric grammatical forms (42–46) and his use of Homeric vocabulary (85–95) as well as listing parallels with Homer in the "fontium et locorum similitum apparatus" (47–83).

53 Cf. van den Berg (2001) 203.

and from Proclus' composition of hymns in Homeric style. This chapter has focused on the work of Syrianus and his two pupils, Proclus and Hermias, since the approach to Homer in the surviving works of all three is essentially the same. It remains to enquire whether this approach was maintained by subsequent Neoplatonists.

Hermias' son Ammonius, head of the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria in the latter part of the fifth century CE, continues to treat Homer as an authority and shows some knowledge of the preceding tradition of interpretation but makes no use of allegory.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand the commentary on Plato's *Gorgias* composed by Ammonius' pupil Olympiodorus who taught at Alexandria in the sixth century CE contains several passages which refer to allegories of Homer of the kind discussed in this chapter: the allusion to the "golden chain" of *Iliad* 8.19 at §47.2 is perhaps something of a commonplace, but the references to allegorical interpretation of Zeus' union with Hera at §46.4 and to the Neoplatonist understanding of the wanderings of Odysseus and of the god Hephaestus at §47.5 do suggest that Olympiodorus accepted the kind of allegorical interpretations which were current in the fifth-century Athenian school.<sup>55</sup> Similarly Damascius who studied philosophy both in Alexandria and in Athens and was head of the Athenian school at the time of its closure in 529 CE mentions Homer in connection with *seirai* ("chains") in his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* (II 33.4–5) and, like Syrianus and Proclus, assumes the agreement of Homer with Orphic poetry and therefore cites *Iliad* 14.261 when discussing Night in his work *On First Principles* (III 163.5–6). Further discussion of the reception of Homer by the very last pagan Neoplatonists lies outside the scope of this chapter but the evidence I have mentioned does suggest that the distinctive approach found in the work of Syrianus, Proclus and Hermias did not disappear but continued as one strand in the complex tradition of responses to "the poet" inherited by subsequent philosophers.

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54 See Manolea (2009).

55 Cf. Jackson, Lycos and Tarrant (1998) 291, n. 879 and 301, n. 929.

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